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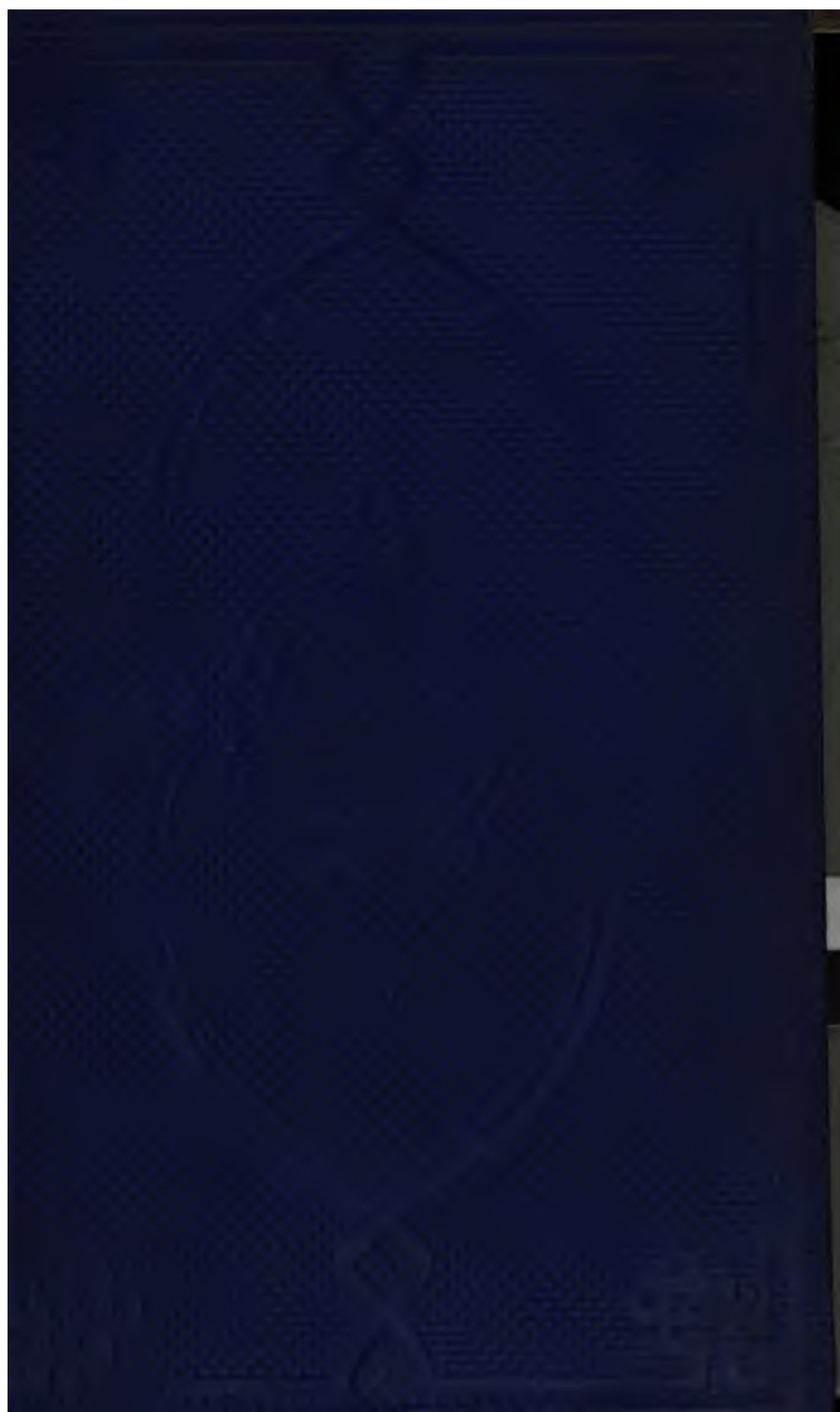
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GOOD IN EVERYTHING.

A TALE.

BY MRS. FOOT.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



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GOOD IN EVERYTHING.

CHAPTER I.

IN emotion is the life of humanity, and without it we die. This is a first principle of our nature; and, indeed, of the universe. It is a lesson visible in the morning mist, which, like a spring-tide of eternity, rushes over the earth to renew the vital principle of its being; and in the throbs of glory with which the stars of the night wrestle with their own radiance. Our hearts do not sooner cease to live when they cease to

beat, than do our souls cease to live when they cease to thrill with sensations ; and, if the healthy pulse of virtue be wanting, they even yield, for dear life's sake, to the galvanic current of vice. We cannot afford to live dull lives ; and, in fact, we never do. This does not palliate or account for evil, but it takes us one step backward towards its cause. Perhaps, it is not too much to say, that the growth of any great vice in a man's heart might be traced to the fact of its having been unhappily checked in the exercise of some virtue.

Somewhat to this effect were Mr. Mowbray's reflections, as he sat on a little stile which divided the field from the copse, and listened to the idle talk of the reapers, who, at some little distance, were embracing the yellow corn with their stalwart arms, and hugging it into sheaves. He was a man about thirty-five years of age ; and, to

judge from his appearance, might have passed some fifteen of these years in dissipation; but there was still that air of strength and health about him which can only be fully expressed by the old-fashioned word 'hale;' and a sparkle in the eye, and a firmness in the mouth, told that the man's spirit still considered life at its command, and, having concluded one campaign, in such sort as might be, was pausing for a moment to determine upon the fittest plan for the next.

Marriage is usually the groundwork of a bachelor's reflections under such circumstances; and Mr. Mowbray's deliberations, at the moment to which we refer, were no exception to the rule. Why had he not married? and, whom should he marry? were tacit questions, which thronged his brain with fantastic music, and day-dreams of the sweetest woodland wildness. Calling up

memories of journeys, in his school days, to distant country houses, homes of faithful friends; with the midnight arrival, and hearty greetings in the old corridors, and the morning awakening to the strange, new life around him ; and the first gaze on the face which was first to dash his rough young heart with love. Calling up reminiscences of those events which occasionally occur in the lives of most men, and which may fairly be called adventures, times of doubt and difficulty, when mind battles with mind, and strangers are hurried into sudden intimacies ; and especially reminding him of one of those occasions, when he had knelt, day after day, by the bedside of a dying friend, or enemy, for he scarcely knew which to call him, and had found manhood's passionate love springing up in his heart, from indifferent companionship with his friend's sister ; and again portraying, in all its

vivid details, that darker romance, of which the heroine had cursed him by the manner of her death, though her dying breath had blessed him.

But smiling away, after a time, the traces of the emotions excited by these reflections, Mr. Mowbray cast his glance upon the prospect before him, in search of fresh subjects for observation ; and, after having noticed, with tasteful satisfaction, the feathery clump of poplars, which gave elevation and grace to the middle distance ; and the cottages strewn under the shadow of the woods, as though they were a species of shell washed up by the billowy ocean of trees ; and the white masses of clouds surrounding the afternoon's sun, as though they were sponsors attending the baptism of a new-born seraph ; after having bathed his imagination, as it were, in the warm glow of the rich autumn scene, he allowed

his eyes to rest upon an object almost immediately before them, and which, to an ordinary observer, would have offered but little interest.

This object was a board erected on a post, and bearing an inscription which intimated that that capital mansion, Stukeley House, was to be sold, with so many acres of pasture-land ; and that applications, with reference to that notice, were to be made to Mr. Billiter, of Cranborough, the nearest market town.

We have just said that this notice would have been an object of but little interest to the ordinary observer, but we feel inclined to retract this observation, when, with Mr. Mowbray, we gaze beyond it upon the mansion to which it refers ; for we perceive, at once, that he must have been indeed dull of heart, and slow of mind, who could have passed by without experiencing



a feeling of regret, that any family should be induced or forced by circumstances to resign so fit a home for domestic happiness.

It was a red brick mansion, and seemed filled with the generous blood of antiquity. It had gables, and mullioned windows, and a turret older than itself, and a porch and terrace not unworthy of notice ; but its chief means of claiming the stranger's sympathy, were the perfect manner with which it harmonized with the richly-wooded landscape around it, and the liberal amplitude of its proportions, by which it seemed to invite the presence of human affections.

Although he was alone, a slight flush of shame passed over Mr. Mowbray's countenance, as he contemplated Stukeley House in connection with the intimation that it was to be sold. "I suppose it wouldn't do to buy it," he said to himself, as he descended from his seat on the stile, and crossed the

meadow, which was a miracle of fructification, and as full of wondrous flagree work, as though autumn had striven to emulate with her ripe grasses, the wintry marvels of the frosted casement. Beyond the meadow was a rude little bridge, leading into a narrow lane, so rough with the roots of the elms which stood beside it, that, as it lay stretched out in the sunshine, it resembled a gladiator's arm. The lane led into an old, disused road, skirted on one side by a massive brick wall, which had acquired by age a kind of loamy richness; and by following this road for some ten minutes, Mr. Mowbray arrived at the gates to the avenue which led up to Stukeley House.

There is always a pathos about a man, who may be left last and alone of any once populous place. He appears to live in an atmosphere of unfulfilled hopes and regrets; he is the solitary survivor of a long continued

battle; he knows how the conquerors died, and whither the vanquished have fled. It was impossible to regard without interest the old gardener who replied to the stranger's summons. He was far advanced in years, but the ruddiness of youth had become entangled in the deep lines of his countenance, and seemed unable to escape. He was somewhat bent, and there was an air of mingled patience and eagerness in his bearing, which seemed to give intimation of watchfulness for the dawning of the rose, of impatience for the removal of the dead leaf from the path. It was impossible to regard without interest a man whose whole life had been spent in evolving beauty from a certain spot of ground and who was, expecting every hour to be sent abroad into a world whose ways he had never had need to learn, and whose modes of thought his simple, truthful nature utterly ignored.

He was a little rusty on this particular morning, like his gates, and the fact may be accounted for by his just having had an interview with the smart, busy house-agent, Mr. Billiter, who, in his shiny black suit, had passed the morning looking over the property, getting up materials for that poetical effusion which, in case it were not soon disposed of by private contract, he expected to have to recite respecting Stukeley House, with bids for an accompaniment and an auctioneer's hammer for the chorus.

He was an acute man, whether in business or out of it, and could tell the value of an ivy-covered tower or an antique porch to a five-pound note; he was no despiser of tangled copses and sentimental glades, as business men are sometimes said to be, but regarded them as cheques drawn upon fat citizen purchasers, and certain to be honoured.



And it was this very appreciation of the venerable mansion-house which had irritated the old gardener. What right had a whipper-snapper, who passed half his life in a dingy office in a dismal street in a dreary town, and the other half in telling lies to get money out of people's pockets—what right had such a fellow to admire, after five minutes' observation, what he who had spent seventy years upon the premises had learned in seventy years to love. Had Mr. Billiter gone over the place with a careless step and a dull eye, his old companion would have pitied and despised him with much satisfaction, and even great good humour; but, as it was, he was irritated, very much irritated.

It was Mr. Mowbray's pride that he never put himself into an undignified position; and he scrupulously refrained, therefore, from replying to the many bitter

things uttered by his companion, and which his conscience, without any great stretch of ingenuity, was able to apply to himself. So, persuading himself that he rather enjoyed his feelings of annoyance as fresh 'emotions,' he continued his ramble through the grounds, at every step finding sentiments revived in his heart which he had believed to be long since utterly dead within him. At length, on the borders of 'The Wilderness,' which, formerly a feature in all gardens, was preserved in the grounds of Stukeley House in pristine regularity, he came to a spot of ground, marked out in a manner which at once showed that it had been possessed by children, as their own private garden-ground.

He paused here, as did the gardener, and seemed to find in the contemplation of the goggle-eyed sunflowers, dissipated-looking marigolds, muddy-tinted wallflowers

and sulky-looking pansies, with which the spot abounded, food for pensive and earnest thought. And, but a short time previously, another man, of a very different character Mr. Billiter, had in like manner stood there, also engaged in earnest thought; the subject of his speculations being the question—whether he should allow that small patch of ground to remain in its present state, or have it wholly swallowed up in a commonplace flower-bed.

On the one hand, he had considered that, although it was twelve years since four of the five children, who had owned those five gardens, had been swept off, by fever, at one fell swoop, timid mothers might still tremble at the idea of planting their olive branches in the neighbourhood of so sad a domestic catastrophe. But then, on the other hand, he reasoned with himself, there was no romantic story connected with the house,

old as it was—no delightful suspicion of a ghost—no room built up because it had been the scene of something terrible; and, really, the sentimental and romantic appearance of the house required some corroboration—some backing up, in fact; and in default of anything better, the existence of these little gardens would serve the purpose very well; and having made up his mind on this knotty point, the busy house-agent had whisked himself away, to the intense relief of the old gardener, who had stood by trembling for the existence of what he considered the jewel of the whole place. But Mr. Mowbray standing there, had fallen into a reverie, which had touched his heart, stirring up old memories.

He remembered how, during the first years of his career as a man of pleasure, as it is ironically termed, he had come down, ever and anon, to that quiet country

side, and, with mingled satisfaction and remorse, had found himself welcomed by those innocent children, whose near neighbour he was, as though he were even innocent as themselves. He thought of Clara, whose eyes so much resembled broad, blue butterflies, over some sweetness hovering; and of Rosa, whose funny, sweet little mouth was like a purse, close shut, but brimmed with golden smiles; and of Bessie, with a forehead so clear and fair, that you would scarcely have been surprised at beholding a bright star dawn in its calm expanse; and of Jack, the sturdy, the roguish, the merry, whose happy, scarlet, chubby face resembled one of those ingenious paper toys, which can be changed into fifty entirely different shapes in as many consecutive seconds.

He thought of these who were now so long dead, having melted away twelve

years ago from before the hot fever breath, and he thought of them with feelings which, perchance some angel might know how to interpret into prayer. But there was a fifth garden, and it had belonged to a child, who had survived the terrible stroke which had almost desolated her home, and had lived to be a stately woman.

And of Mabel Beresford, with a smile which seemed to be one of surprise, Mr. Mowbray now thought, as he gazed upon the spot where he had so often seen her toiling, like a thorough little labourer, enjoying perfect freedom from all the conventionalities of the school-room and the boudoir. Rather brighter, rather handsomer, rather livelier than her sisters and brother, had she then been ; and the change which had been worked in her by the fever, bore no slight resemblance to the death which it had brought to them. She was still young, still

handsome, still energetic; but the sap of life seemed to have been dried up by the fever; her gentle spirit seemed to have accompanied those which had fled to Heaven, and left only a galvanic life to animate the frame, which had fearfully struggled with death. Since the death of her brother and sisters, she had seemed to be, not an emblem of innocence and forgiveness, as formerly, but rather of inquisitorial rebuke.

She had aged rapidly on her recovery, and had adopted womanly reserve at an age when most girls are still loth to lose their childhood's freedom, and are wont to make occasional snatches at it, in frolics which to the admiring eyes of the male sex, appear so exquisitely graceful, and to middle aged spinsters, seem so thoroughly rude and unbecoming.

Of Mabel Beresford, then, Mr. Mowbray

now thought, and although he had known her for twenty years, his meditations were accompanied by what appeared to be a smile of surprise.

CHAPTER II.

IN LOVE! yes! And why not say *in hate* also?

Is not hate as strong a passion; as brilliant, as enduring, as full of phases as love? Does it not equally control the soul of a man; is it not equally a great colouring in the picture of his life? Let us say then, that such a man is in hate, and understand by this term—all the phantasms of spirit, all the glow of heart, all the quickness of imagination, all the settled strength of purpose, all the yearning and the longing,

and the hope, which belong to hate as much as to that twin dominion, love.

In the Spanish room, as it was called, a fair and noble chamber in Stukeley House, of which the window recesses were filled with sunlight, and orange trees in bloom, whilst a great wood fire ripened intensely, on the ample hearth, sat old Mr. Beresford, the owner of the mansion; sat there by the fire-side in an arm-chair, whose quaint magnificence would have appeared barbarously rich, had it not been toned down by that artist with the true eye for colour, Time. And as they breathed there softly, but moodily, side by side, there was no slight resemblance between the old age of the fire, and that of the mortal who seemed to cower near it, and cling to it, as though of all the world it were his only friend, and he knew that its death must be simultaneous with his own. They were much alike. The

hoary wood-ash shaded the vehement heat which glowed in the one ; the hoary locks softened, but could not hide the fiery passion which lit the eyes and features of the other. Equally silent and motionless, were they now ; equally concentrating the strength of their lives, to their inmost hearts ; but let a rude touch arouse them, and what sparks of passion would they send forth in angry fury, what burning gulfs, what fiery craters, what vehement intensity of fierceness would blaze from their fury !—But, after all, the venerable air of the fire, and of the mortal who sat beside it, were to a certain extent equally unreal ; for as the fire was in reality but a mere baby furnace of some two or three hours, and had not had time as yet even to dream of a salamander, so the old gentleman was not in reality much more than sixty years of age ; and, consequently, scarcely had a right to his aspect of patri-

archal antiquity. Perhaps he had fallen into this look of withered old from sickness—perhaps from mere carelessness ; perhaps he had assumed it to hide, by toning down the rest of his life to its level, some moral or physical infirmity. And if this had been his object, nature had ably seconded him ; and he was now in body and feeling as old as he appeared.

But a score of years, more or less, matter little ; he can scarcely be older than he now is, whatever the number of years since his birth, for his hopes are gone, and his only hold on life, is the bitter hatred he feels for the man who has robbed him of them, or whom he believes to have done so. He forgets now the despair which had overwhelmed him, when all his children, but one, had been torn away from him at a single clutch, and broods only over the circumstances which have deprived him of the broad acres, which

had descended to him from his ancestors, of the sunny farms which were wide enough to have their own horizon, their own sunrise, and sunset. Sometimes he would laugh—as old age laughs—and persuade himself for a brief moment that it must be a dream, and that, surely, something so absolutely real, as the Beresford estates, with their purple woods, and wide paths, their sunny vales and ample fields, with the old churches, whose tombs were as title deeds of his family's ancestral fame and their venerable mansions, over whose threshold, through long ages, the wise and beautiful had passed, as over the lips of poets, words of beauty and of wisdom ;—surely, these lands with princely revenues had not dropped from his grasp, as a child's bauble ! But it was even so, and he could only clasp his hands together in passion and grief, till each seemed to have clasped palms with death.

Meanwhile, in the deep recess of one of the windows, in the midst of the orange trees and the sunlight, stood Mabel and Frederick Beresford ; not brother and sister, but cousins ; Mabel, the daughter of the house, and Frederick, the son of Sir Andrew, Mr. Beresford's elder brother, who resided at Belmore, a fine place some ten miles distant. There was a difference of about five years in the age of the cousins, Mabel being twenty-four, and Frederick nineteen ; but as the latter was very manly-looking for his age, the difference was scarcely apparent.

They were lovers. The world in its excellent wisdom, generally smiles or sneers at the courtship between a younger man and an older woman ; forgetting that the dew is older than the new-risen sun, which woos it to his warm embrace ; that the blossom is older than the west wind, which rifles its perfume. The idea is, that the

woman, being the elder, will be too bold in her love, and thus at once lose all the charm of the bashfulness of youthful passion. But nothing can be falser. The truth is, that the woman who has gained the love of a man younger than herself, feels, as it were, that she has for a moment eluded Time, and entered a supernatural world, where his laws are not known. She does not seize her happiness, as something to which she has a right, in the common course of nature, but as a miraculous joy, and a special benediction.

But the opinion of the world was of but little account to Mabel and Frederick; for, in the first place, they were in love, and heeded it not; and, in the second place, the portion of the world with which they came in contact, was a humble world, which only canvassed the doings of Stukeley House and Belmore Hall, when the inhabitants thereof were out of hearing. So Frederick, un-

checked by sneer or remonstrance, loved Mabel, because he was idle, and young, and flattered by a woman's notice ; and Mabel loved her cousin with a deep, burning passion, which had begun in a feeling akin to love, but most unlike it.

When the fever, to which we have before alluded, swept through Stukeley House, it had smitten it not only with death, but with change—a change so startling and apparent, that common-place people had noticed it ; some of them attributing it to the withdrawal of four happy children ; and some of them saying, in reply to this supposition, “No ! they didn't quite understand it.” By which enigmatical and inconsequential, if not ungrammatical, rejoinder, they meant to imply that their profound sagacity had discovered a reason of a very different nature. But however this might be ; it is very certain that after this calamity, Mr. Beresford had be-

gun to lose the noble inheritance, which had descended to him from his mother; and that Mabel had changed from a buoyant girl to something which resembled, one might fancy, the ancient picture of the early womanhood of some female ancestor of her own.

The evening was waning—the serving-man was bringing more logs for the fire—the sunlight had gone, and the twilight was filling the air with shadows, like the shadows on satin—and the old man still sat brooding over his wrongs by the hearth, and the lovers still sat in the deep bay of the window, lost to all consciousness, save the consciousness of happiness, and the knowledge that the world was very fair and good.

“ Well, Mabel ! and how is my little girl, to-night ? ”

It was Mr. Mowbray who spoke ; having

heard from the old gardener that the family had come down to spend a few days at Stukeley House, he had taken advantage of his acknowledged position as 'friend of the family,' to make an unceremonious evening visit.

'Friend of the family !' There have been few families in respect to whom some stranger has not claimed that title ; and few families which have not suffered in some way from this strange piece of relationship. Family affection should be concentrated within itself, four square to all the winds of heaven ; taking example by the living rock, which cannot admit even the dew of heaven, without danger of being rent asunder.

Mr. Mowbray took advantage, then, of the position which had fallen to him, rather than been assumed by him, since his earliest manhood, in the family of his neighbour, Mr. Beresford ; and treated Mabel as though

she were still the little girl whom he once constantly teased and petted. And Mr. Frederick Beresford would, doubtless, have set up the feathers of jealous indignation, and displayed all sorts of contempt for the man who presumed to treat his lady-love with such insolent familiarity, had not his attention been wholly engrossed and arrested by the aspect of a young girl, who had entered with Mr. Mowbray, displaying all the signs of shy reluctance ; but who now clung to his arm with a species of timid temerity, which, to Mr. Frederick's own surprise, irritated him far more than the rights of old acquaintanceship, assumed by Mr. Mowbray, with respect to Mabel.

“ Mr. Frederick Beresford—Miss Helen Monmouth,” said Mr. Mowbray ; and then, turning away, left the two new acquaintances to make that voyage of discovery in the world of a new mind—a new soul—

which is generally undertaken with so much eagerness, and usually ends in so much disappointment.

The cunning eye of old age was upon them ; amidst the armies of shadow, which the flaring fire threw battling on the ceiling, the shadow of old Mr. Beresford hovered over the young people, as they stood at the further end of the hall, like a spectral fate. How short-sighted and weak are mortals who despair. Is there a process against you in the courts?—may not an earthquake, like that of Lisbon, suddenly swallow up law-courts, judge, juries, bailiffs, records, pleas, indictments, and the whole of it? Are you mortally sick?—may not some new preparation of iron—some new application of galvanism—miraculously restore you, as thousands of others have been miraculously restored? Have you lost a child?—may you not have another, fairer and more beautiful?



A sudden change came over the old man's whole appearance, as he arose and welcomed his visitor, who had hitherto, taking advantage of his position as friend of the family, failed to show any consciousness of his presence.

"I hope you are not talking over old times with Mabel, and teaching her to regret Stukeley House, past consolation!"

"To regret a thing, is to have it ever with us," replied Mr. Mowbray; and, as he uttered the words, a slight movement passed over Mabel's frame, such as might have given a careful observer the idea, that she had restrained herself, by a powerful effort, from throwing up her arms towards heaven in anguish. Leaving the two gentlemen in conversation, she turned slowly away towards the other end of the room, and, seating herself in the arm-chair, which her father had just left, bent over the fire—not

crouchingly as he had—but with a gaze and posture which wore an air of eager enquiry. The reflection of the flames, glaring over her countenance, seemed to have converted it into burning marl.

An hour she sat there, struggling against the convictions of her heart, and declaring that there was peace when there was no peace—declaring that the pulse of her life beat full, when she knew, in her inmost consciousness, that her cheek never flushed with joy—her eye never lighted with tenderness; but as a species of lie, by which she attempted to deceive others, as well as herself, that she was happy. And why was it so, she asked herself; ought not love to be all-sufficient?—and did she not love Frederick Beresford with unwavering constancy—with almost desperate passion.

An hour the two gentlemen were talking together at the farther end of the room,

which were as eager as their pride would allow, and as was consistent with the aged prudence of the one and the cool, clear-sightedness of the other. They were both hard, resolute men, by nature, and these characteristics were usually apparent in all that they said ; but, on this occasion, had any one acquainted with them stood near, he would have been surprised at the momentary bursts of tenderness in which each seemed occasionally to indulge, almost involuntarily.

They were speaking of Mabel ; and they spared a few moments from wasted lives to speak of her lovingly and truthfully. They perceived that there was some shadow over her whole being, which ought not to rest upon one so young ; and they were not too selfish to be grieved at this, when they gave themselves time to notice it. Following their own lives, as it were, with the memory

of what she had been in childhood, they found a capacity in themselves for gentle thoughts, of which they scarcely believed themselves capable.

But even their momentary unselfishness was but a more refined species of self-seeking; and they soon included Mabel in their long-accustomed system of regarding every one and everything about them as means to be converted as soon as possible to their own gratification. Her father thought that he loved her; but, as the idea dawned upon him during this interview, that she might possibly be the means of saving him from that loss of position which for years had been the torture of his existence, he almost ceased to regard her as his daughter, and considered her only as a power which, rightly used, would place him in safety. Nor was Mr. Mowbray more generous. It had occurred to him, now that the dawn of

middle age was almost visible, that he would no longer delay to seize that triumph, regarded so highly by dissipated men—the triumph of uniting unsullied virtue and unbroken youth with their own wearied depravity. And who so suitable as Mabel? That she had known him when his life was as innocent as her own, was a more powerful argument with him than he chose to confess, even to himself. That a marriage with Mabel would relieve him from the necessity of enforcing the debts owed to him by her father, and also from the imputation which began to be whispered about the countryside, that he had ruined Mr. Beresford, by inducing him to enter into rash gambling, and speculative transactions, whilst he had taken care to secure himself from loss, were reasons which appeared to him of greater weight.

And so it was arranged that Mabel was

to marry Mr. Mowbray. And through all that night Mabel stood gazing into the darkness, brooding over the hope which had seemed for a moment to be afforded her of fulfilling her life, and satisfying her heart, and which was now so suddenly torn away.

As the miracle of day-break was once more performed in the heavens, she turned away from the sight, a desperate and a bad-hearted woman.

CHAPTER III.

A WOMAN should ever look upon her life as the silken thread given her to string a rosary of tears. Let her be glad, if she be permitted to count the prayers of her heart by her tears, kneeling peacefully in the temple of religion, before the altar of hope.

Mabel Beresford had now reached, or thought she had reached, the dead level of life; she knew no hope—and, with a nature like hers, to know no hope, is to know no God.

A tacit understanding—which owed its

birth to neither look, nor word, nor deed—had arisen between herself and Frederick, declaring that they were no longer to each other what they had been ; and this, not because Mabel was formally engaged to Mr. Mowbray, but because Frederick had made another step in the history of his life, and, having loved as a worshipper, was now experiencing the delight of being himself the object of such love. Girl as she was, the shadow of Helen Monmouth had fallen between Mabel and Frederick ; and the sword which used to be laid at night between the princess, and the proxy who had betrothed her for a king, was not a more complete separation. But, although, in reality, all had passed between them, in outward seeming, their lives were still the same ; for Mr. Mowbray was horrified at the idea of being suspected of either love-making or jealousy, and his courtship of

Mabel was almost wholly confined to making her occasional magnificent presents of diamonds—to match her tears with. And Frederick had been so accustomed all his life to companionship with Mabel, that it never occurred to him that he ought to be less frequently with her now than formerly; besides, he was her cousin. And as for Mabel, why, her love for her cousin was more passionate now than ever, for her heart was broken—and from the broken vase pours the wine most swiftly.

So time went on; and the summer once more hid the glowing sky with leaves, as a fair girl covers her blushing face with her hands; and Mabel and Frederick lived a kind of Watteau life; for, on the one side, there was a passionate love, which never passed the bounds of a certain rich formality—and, on the other, a youthful life and energy, whose very life-blood was

fraught with the ardour of romance, and which willingly showered a certain tenderness around it, out of pure good will.

But there is an end to all things; and, one morning, Mr. Mowbray awoke with a strong conviction that Mabel's indifference to himself, and marked tenderness for young Beresford, should be at once sternly checked. Probably, one of those twinges which are such certain attendants on a life of dissipation, had intimated to him that it was just possible a man like himself might be very unfavourably contrasted, in a woman's mind, with one whose life had been as pure as her own.

"I will put an end to all this," growled Mr. Mowbray, allowing his thoughts to concern themselves, in a vague and unsatisfactory manner, with Mabel and Frederick Beresford.

But Mr. Mowbray was no coarse rural

lover—by no means the man to remain perfectly blind long after neighbours have begun to smile and pity, and then, when at length aroused to jealousy, to burst forth in paroxysms of brutal rage. He could joke himself out of anger as easily as most men can be joked into it, and he took particular pains to accomplish this pleasant little operation on the present occasion.

In the course of the day he took an opportunity of seeing Frederick Beresford, and, falling into conversation with him, turned their discourse upon the vastness and beauty of the universe—the mysteries of human life—and the grandeur of the incitements to the exercise of the highest virtue by which man is constantly surrounded. He then paused, to allow the full influence of that religious silence which ever sways with such tumultuous sensations the hearts of the young, when it succeeds the utterance of words of wisdom or truth.

Suddenly he resumed the conversation.

“ And when I think of the opportunities any man has of adding to the general happiness of the world, or of clothing his soul with the virtue of a single self-denial, I am positively disgusted with myself for the manner in which I have neglected such as have fallen to my share. Now, for instance, I am sure you will excuse me, Beresford, for we are old, and, I hope, sincere friends—here have I been taking advantage of certain circumstances to separate two young hearts, and selfishly to bind one of them to my own weary, worn-out life. But no, by heaven! I will not do it—I will not blight your best and purest hopes, Frederick!—you shall have your Mabel; and, as for myself, why, I suppose, I must just manage to ramble through this cold, desolate existence, as I have rambled through it hitherto—a poor, weary pilgrim—unless, indeed,”—and

here Mr. Mowbray chose to give expression to one of those sad, sweet smiles, of which he was rather proud—"unless, indeed, the little Helen should some day grow terrified at the turmoil of the world, and be willing to fly from it to an old man's kindness,"—and as Mr. Mowbray ceased speaking he gazed fondly on a spray of roses which he held in his hand, and which no resident in the neighbourhood could have failed to recognize as being from a noted bush in the Monmouth's garden.

Frederick was thunderstruck and horrified. He seemed to himself to have been suddenly chained to some hideous corpse, from which it was impossible to escape. In the very flush and newness of his first love, which was in truth, for Helen Monmouth, he was reminded of the sentimental affection in which, partly out of gratified vanity and idleness, and partly out of a general

affectionateness of virtue, he had indulged with respect to Mabel Beresford.

The love of the young is very selfish ; and Frederick was very much irritated ; and therefore, we should be sorry to repeat, since he is to be our hero, all the unjustifiable and ungenerous words with which Frederick endeavoured to rebut what Mr. Mowbray had chosen to infer. He brought forward, for the purpose of laughing at them, many of the little tender actions by which Mabel had first declared her love ; he attempted to caricature her appearance ; and to describe her during the long years which she had passed in weary loneliness, as a bitter-minded old maid, pining for a lover at any cost.

Mr. Mowbray continued to smile, but Frederick felt that it was a smile like that of a winter sun, which smiles at the earth, not with it ; and he grew more and more

furious, until at length he could no longer speak with even the show of patience, and he rushed away to hold a lover's angry argument with solitude.

Will it look too much like a scene-shifter's trick, if we say that Mr. Mowbray had contrived that Frederick should utter the greater portion of his angry denunciation against poor Mabel, close to the conservatory in which he knew that she generally passed that hour of the afternoon? Really there is nothing improbable in this, for an angry man is blind, and a jealous one inventive. But probable or not, we need not defend the reasonableness of the circumstance, for it actually so occurred. Mabel stepped from the conservatory, dressed for riding; her horse was waiting for her, pawing the gravel in the avenue, as though it knew of some buried diamond, worthy of its mistress, and would fain reach it.

“So, after all, Mabel, you see that you must even content yourself with your poor old worn-out Mowbray.”

“That has been settled already” replied Mabel, and as she spoke she struck the gentleman across the face a desperate stroke, that drew an angry a line there, as sudden and scarlet as the track of a September meteor.

“Ha, ha, ha ! Ha, ha, ha !”

Mabel and Mr. Mowbray started at the sudden, strange, and uncouth sounds, and looking round, beheld within a few paces of them, the village idiot, who had been rambling about the garden with his usual license, and had watched the whole scene.

CHAPTER IV.

HIS lordship's appearance was very unlike the idea generally entertained of a belted earl; twenty years, even, had elapsed since he had left off wearing stays. He resembled, in fact, an angry mouse, more than anything else, unless it were a grey rat, who had seen the world and fallen into decay. And he was blind; not with the blindness of those whose visual sense is preserved from the distractions of the common things of the world, that it may gaze more clearly on the grand laws of harmony—and not with the blindness of those whose sight is taken from

them in this world, that they and their neighbours may learn that the senses are not the only language in which heaven can converse with earth—no! but with a disgraceful, blurred, and blotted blindness, which was the result of disease—the excesses of youth—the vices of manhood—and the follies of age.

The Earl of Ankerton is thus abruptly introduced to the reader's notice at one of those moments of which his life was almost wholly composed, when he was in a passion—in a deadly passion—in a raging fit of wrath—which so completely pervaded his whole being, that the sight taken from his eyes appeared to have been diffused over his whole form, and to shoot vindictive glances from every portion of his body. He is standing in the hall of the residence of his solicitor, Mr. Bush, and enquiring for that gentleman.

"Gone into the country; and won't be back till Monday," replies the clerk, exchanging an amused look with the servant, who stands by his lordship's side half-supporting him.

"Ah!" shouts his lordship, and shaking off the servant's arm, and flourishing his crutch in front of him, he rushes to the stair-case, and, clutching at the banisters, sometimes taking two steps, sometimes more, ascends them, very much in the fashion of a wounded, starving bear. Reaching the door of Mr. Bush's room, and opening it with a wrench and a jerk, he stumbles to a chair, with a sort of grunt, and sinks down, exhausted.

Of course. Mr. Bush is in.

A thin conversation about his lordship's health, and the opinion of the oculist respecting his lordship's sight, having been concluded, the earl proceeds to explain, somewhat unnecessarily, that the object of

his visit is money. Mr. Bush merely replies by an exclamation indicative of contempt and weariness, and devotes his attention once more to the business on which he had been engaged when his lordship entered the room.

“I want some money—a hundred pounds. I must have it directly. Flyman and Good’s man is waiting till I go back—Bush, do you hear me? You can keep it back at quarter-day. What! the trustees have given strict directions——? D—— the trustees!—curse them—curse them! Why was I ever such a fool as to bind myself down in this way? Where’s the money? I will have the money! Madame Vallance says she will have it! I dare not go back without it. Only one hundred pounds—only fifty—now let me have it, Bush, there’s a good fellow. Only fifty. What! my quarter’s income due in six weeks—twelve

hundred and fifty pounds? You lying dog—you scoundrel—you villain! don't you know that I have sold it to Lewis for seven hundred pounds, and the quarter after that for six? I'm helpless and hopeless, you devil, am I—am I?"

Losing all self-restraint, as he uttered these words, the wretched old man rose from his seat, and, rushing towards Mr. Bush, made furious attempts to strike him with his crutch. Everything around not endowed with powers of locomotion, fell before those furious blows; and they only ceased when one sweep of the crutch, somewhat wilder than the rest, sent one of the window panes tinkling into the area below. His lordship then dropped his crutch, and, with one of those sudden transitions common to undisciplined minds, began to moan and weep.

"I only want my own—I only want my

own ! Let me have all my estate to myself again, and I'll pay my debts myself."

Mr. Bush was taking advantage of the momentary lull to leave the room, but the earl, who had frequently acted the scene before, was too quick for him, and, rushing to him and seizing him by the tail of his coat, went down upon his knees and renewed his entreaties : " Only twenty-five pounds—only twenty-five pounds !"

Mr. Bush was not easily shocked, but there was something in the blind old man's abasement, which annoyed and distressed him, and turning back to his table, and begging his lordship to be calm, and to remember his position, he conversed with him calmly and kindly, as he had done some scores of times before, on the state of his affairs ; at the same time, filling up and handing to his lordship a cheque for the required hundred pounds.

It is not generally known, but it is, nevertheless, the case, that many men have to be bribed to a certain extent before they will afford their solicitors information which their own interests absolutely demand from them. Extremes meet, and the spendthrift is in some degree the most avaricious of men. Young Rapid's lawyer requests him to look through his papers for some memorandum, and Rapid invariably demands, more or less openly, that he should be paid, as it were, for his trouble, by the advance of so much money. And of this peculiar determination to be paid for services rendered, the Earl of Ankerton had been the most notable example, and he had demanded, from first to last, at least five thousand pounds of his own money before he would complete transactions which had been commenced and carried on solely at his own request. Mr. Bush was well aware

of the existence of this strange form of avarice in his client, and it is quite possible that the hundred pounds which he now handed to the earl, with every testimony of respect, had not been extracted from him solely by the earl's violence.

"But seriously, Bush, what am I to do? Madame Vallance says ——"

"I beg your pardon, my lord; I do not profess to be a particularly good man, but I am advanced in years, as, permit me to say, your lordship is also; and I cannot refrain from saying, my lord, that I would much rather not hear anything about Madame Vallance! We are far from being young men, my lord—far from it!"

"Pshaw! what is a blind old bat like me to do? I must have a housekeeper!"

"Why not marry?"

"For money, sir?—eh, sir? Do you tell me to marry for money, sir?—eh, sir?"

This was one of the very few points on which his lordship even professed to hold any manly or honourable sentiments.

“Certainly not, my lord ! But it cannot have escaped your lordship’s notice, that the trustees, into whose hands you have thought fit to place your estates, are bound to place at your disposal fifty thousand pounds, in the event of your lordship’s marrying?”

As the earl drove homewards, his carriage wheels seemed to roll these words into a sort of tune. Fifty thousand pounds!—fifty thousand pounds! As he sat after dinner, he found himself holding his wine-glass ’mid air, unconsciously, till his arm ached, pondering over these words—fifty thousand pounds !

“Bush is quite right ; I am really becoming old ; and Madame Vallance is such a harpy.—By-the-bye, I wish I had had two

cheques for fifty each, instead of one for a hundred ; she'll insist upon seeing it.—Besides, fifty thousand is something to a man who has sold his next year's income, and, by heaven ! when I come to think of it, I'll get married !”

When the Right Honourable the Earl of Ankerton retired to his usual ten hours' of weariness, and sleeplessness, and wretchedness, and pain, he beguiled two or three dreary hours by concocting schemes by which he might deceive the woman who was the only thing he feared in the world, as to the real amount of the sum he had obtained from Mr. Bush, and two or three more in concocting a letter, which, in the course of the following day, was duly transcribed, and sent to its destination, and which was not without a certain influence upon Mabel Beresford's destiny.



CHAPTER V.

PERHAPS all persons have formed at some period of their lives, the idea that they live according to some settled scheme and rule ; and this idea is the cause of half the mistakes, and most of the obstinacy, which render human society so much of a failure. Some persons adapt that idea as an excuse for disobeying the charities of life, some persons as a reason for neglecting to inquire into its capabilities and duties. It is supposed to throw a religious veil over harshness, and give dignity to lives which are blustering on without thought or purpose towards eternity.

In early life, Mabel had grown angry with God. We would not speak irreverently, but it is the only way in which we can describe a certain phrase of mind, which is not uncommon amongst passionate natures. She had grown angry with God ; perchance, because he had taken from her in early life with one stern grasp, all the objects of her love. She recoiled from the fountain of love and hope, and power ; and yet the principle of religion was strong within her ; the consequence was that she grew as cold-hearted as a fatalist ; never murmured, and never prayed, never sorrowed, and never rejoiced. And from the sullenness of her spirit, fell a shadowy veil over her beauty, which to some persons, and Mr. Mowbray was of the number, had an exquisite charm and mystery.

Mabel, then, was one of the persons who fancy that they conduct their lives accord-



ing to a settled scheme and principle. As in most such cases, Mabel's scheme or principle was very vague, and undefined; but it had led her now to determine very decidedly, that she would submit to a torturing match with Mr. Mowbray; submit without a murmur, and enjoy to the full the anguish it would cause her.

The world is large enough for any amount of sorrow; it is not for want of room here that broken hearts emigrate to heaven. Mabel found ample space and food for her grief; on hill side, and in forest path, by the brook that is fond of talking, but has nothing to say, by the river that knows much, but bears it all in the silence, to whisper it at length to the heart of the great deep.

In the mean time, Mr. Mowbray had found a new interest in life—hatred. At the period of our story, the idea which

chiefly occupied the minds of the upper classes of Great Britain was *insult*.

Every age has been peculiarly interested in some particular subject.

At one period it has been, *dress*.

At another, *Religion*.

At another, *commerce*.

At another, *war*.

At another, *locomotion*.

At the period of our story it was, *Insult*. Etiquette and the laws of duelling ruled society; between the black silk stockings of the master of the ceremonies, and the foil of the fencing-master, it appeared to have its whole being. To give an ill word in those days was to ensure a horse-whipping; whilst to receive one was almost equivalent to a death warrant.

A blow from a woman's hand, indeed, could no more be avenged by a man in those days than in these; but it meant

more. To receive one then was one of those misfortunes which, even against all the rules of reason, it is impossible not to consider a disgrace.

It meant more, we say; and Mr. Mowbray fancied that the blow he had received from Mabel, meant that she had discovered a low and brutal nature through his air of high breeding, a course of crafty cunning in his career of graceful dissipation, a grasping at a final triumph over her father in his desire to obtain her hand.

Mr. Mowbray was right; Mabel had meant all this.

* * * *

Mr. Beresford received the Earl of Ankerton's letter in due course, and received it with feelings somewhat similar to those with which a lady feels the first bunch of violets thrown into her face at Carnival time—decidedly satisfactory, but

startling; and just tinged with a little bitterness. He had just sold his daughter for so much, and here was an offer of so much more. Of course, he immediately resolved to be off his engagement with Mr. Mowbray, and employed useless ingenuity in devising a means of so doing, for that wily gentleman knew of Lord Anker-ton's proposal very shortly after it was made, and voluntarily assured Mr. Beresford, that bitter as the sacrifice would be to him, he would never permit his own poor fortunes to be a bar between Mabel, and those higher destinies, which &c.

When Mabel heard of the fresh engagement which her father had entered into for her, she was stupefied with amazement. She hated the thought of marriage with Mr. Mowbray worse than death; but to be thus treated, to his knowledge, as though she were so much merchandize was more than



she could bear. It seemed to make her too contemptible even to walk in the great shadow of destiny. Besides ; when you have thrown yourself into an attitude to defy the lightning, you prefer that it should come from the quarter whence you expect it.

“Well, Mabel! so the rich man has stolen my little lamb!” said Mr. Mowbray, as he met the young lady, a few mornings after the arrival of the Earl of Ankerton’s letter. “When is the marriage to take place?”

His address was by several tones more familiar than usual, and there was a studied vulgarity in his manner and bearing which fell upon Mabel like a stab to the heart ; for she considered it an emblem of the estimation in which she must henceforth be held.

CHAPTER VI.

“WHAT is the matter with that girl? she gets more strange, really, every day,” said Mrs. Monmouth, a pretty woman of middle age, with bloom still upon her cheek, and that expression in her countenance and about her whole demeanour, which denoted a mind at ease, and speaks plainly the two words—self-comfort. Indeed, hers was a face upon which no earthly care seemed likely to leave its iron mark, unless it interfered with that. There was no depth in her eye, it was a pale blue, and had a shallow look, as though its owner could



never see beyond the surface of anything. She was now in the act of sorting shades of Berlin wool, with which she seemed literally surrounded. Her work was a chair-cover; she had toiled through four out of six, and was rarely ever seen doing anything else: she did not raise her eyes from her employment, but continued—

“What is she gone about now? She has hardly been in the room an hour since breakfast, and instead of sitting down there to fancy-work, or any other lady’s employment, she must scribble away at that desk like any banker’s clerk. I wish she would be more like other girls of her age; it is useless to fancy that a face and figure, admired though they are, can make amends for such eccentricity and nonsense: what can she be *doing* now, I wonder?”

This harangue, it appeared, was addressed to Emily Monmouth, her youngest daughter,

a girl of sixteen, who also bent over an embroidery-frame ; but as it was Mrs. Monmouth's habit, when she was *wool-gathering*, to chatter thus in a desultory way about whatever might be uppermost in her mind, never getting heated with her subject, but ever cool and mild, taking her time upon each sentence, sometimes making a long pause in the middle-of one, and apparently contented if her work, or the room in general, were the only audience edified, often inferring a question, and rambling on altogether heedless of a reply ; it is not to be wondered at, then, that several moments elapsed before Emily spoke, not feeling quite sure that an answer was needed at all, or that her mother had quite finished what she intended to say.

Most people would have called Emily Monmouth a very pretty girl : she had her mother's sunny look, and would have been



exceedingly like her, only her eyes were two or three shades deeper ; her hair much the same, fair and glossy ; but her face was in sad want of that soul-speaking, ever-varying expression which characterized that of her sister Helen (of whom her mother had just been speaking). Her hair was of a dark, rich hue, and she was the taller by quite half a head, which may have accounted for this in part, besides a deep earnestness in manner at times, and in the full, expressive eye and sweetly-shaped mouth, which rendered her truly beautiful. It may be that, fond as Emily was of her sister, this fact caused ever and anon a passing shadow of the *yellow monster*, Jealousy, to flit through her heart, but it never remained there long, for hers was a kindly one. There was also another cause which made her feel her inferiority to Helen, but this never roused *that shadow* ; she felt

that not only in person was her sister her superior, but in something far greater—in mind, the depth of which she was as much at a loss, or nearly so, as her mother to understand—but she was not unjust; and while she acknowledged this, she silently wondered what could be the secret working of her sister's soul.

“I think, mamma, that Helen has been to see poor Dick Carter this morning. I am not sure, but when I went into the drawing-room, about an hour ago, to feed my canary, she came in with her bonnet on; she looked very warm, and said she had walked very fast. I did not think for the moment but what she had been up to the hall for some of the jelly Mrs. Truman promised to make papa; only now I remember, last Friday evening, just before supper, I heard Frederick Beresford, who you know went with dear Harry to London, the next morning,

asking her to go and see poor Dick for him, while he was away. He has never recovered that severe illness from being upset in his cart, and breaking his leg, poor old man ! He asked Helen ; and, I remember, she promised to go and see him, and old Nancy Williams, too. George Beresford, who was standing by, said Mr. Sandford, their tutor, would go, he was sure ; but Frederick said he should feel much happier if Helen would see them too, particularly as George was going to stay with his sister-in-law, at Brently Manor, for a week or two. He has almost as much faith in George as he has in Helen, I think. He said Mr. Sandford had been such a short time with them, that, although he liked him very much, he, of course, could not take the same interest in poor Dick as they all did ; so Helen agreed to see that he had all he needed, and that Doctor Baines should be sent for, if required, and ——”



Here Mrs. Monmouth interrupted her daughter.

“Why, surely, anybody could see to that; they have a host of servants at the hall, more than can be possibly needed; they could have sent one every day to attend to the old man. Helen, if she does not mind, will entirely ruin her complexion by getting heated in this way; and then, I dare say, she went up-stairs and drank cold water, after a walk of eight miles or more in a broiling sun. That is another of her peculiarities,—the other day, when she went with me to distribute the coal-tickets, I am sure at every cottage we stopped she asked for water; and, from looking like alabaster when we went out, she came home with cheeks the colour of this,”—holding up a skein of scarlet wool. “My cousin Emma lost a first-rate match I remember, by losing her complexion, much in the same manner. She

had met Colonel Prim twice, and he had, undoubtedly, fallen in love with her. He had a splendid seat of his own ; but she was for ever getting into violent heats ; and, after dancing and walking till she could scarcely stand, would drink quantities of cold water. Once she took a severe inward cold, and an eruption came out all over her face and neck ; she never lost it either ; and, of course, the Colonel, when he saw her, was quite shocked with her appearance ; indeed, they said he did not in the least recognize her, it changed her so. I do wish Helen would take advice by that now, and settle more down into a reasonable being, taking more pleasure in society, and in scenes befitting her age and station, than in going to sit with an old disabled gardener ; she can save her money,”—Mrs. Monmouth yawned—“ and send him a little occasionally—the same as we all did for Martha,

when she was ill—not that he can want it, though, for the ‘hall’ people must pretty well keep him and his family.”

“Oh! no, indeed, dear mamma,” said Emily, “you forget that proud young lady, Miss Mabel; at least, she is to every one except Frederick Beresford.”

“Ah! I was going to say, Emily, you are wrong there; for Mrs. Truman once told me, it was quite disgusting to see her manners to him sometimes; she forgets Frederick is no longer a boy.”

“Well, but, mamma,” broke in Emily, “I was going to say she never was seen to go near one of Sir Andrew’s poor tenants, and there are so many; I am sure she would never allow the servants to go and attend to poor Dick, they are all quite afraid of her.”

“But Mrs. Truman has lived there so many years, surely she can, as housekeeper,

order the servants as she likes, or go and see him herself, if she pleases."

"She is very good in having many things made for him," replied Emily; "but, of late, Sir Andrew has been more irritable and fidgetty than ever; he cannot bear her to be away from her rooms a half-hour, if he knows it; and when the bad attacks of gout come on, she is the only person he will let go near him. Marion Grey told Helen and me so, the other night."

"Are they as fond as ever?" said the mother, her ideas floating into another channel.

"Oh, yes! Mrs. Truman said when we went up-stairs to put our things on, she was sure that would be a match, and she was very glad, for Miss Marion was a sweet young lady. But, mamma, you said just now that Helen did not enjoy scenes fitting her years; why the other night she never

sat down one dance, and was by far the gayest there ; she danced five times with Frederick Beresford."

" Did she look very lovely ? did they all admire her ? I think it is foolish though, for any young girl to dance five times with one gentleman, unless she is engaged ; but this is peculiar, so, of course, Helen must do it."

" Every one always does admire her," returned Emily, " except Miss Mabel, and I overheard her say she had too bold a look ever to be pretty, much less beautiful as some call her. I certainly think she dances *rather* too much when she is out."

The yellow shadow was glimmering in Emily's breast ; for Helen had been the acknowledged belle of the evening ; but another second and it was gone, for the bright hue she called to mind on Helen's cheek that night, was the same her mother had des-

cribed, after giving the coal tickets ; and she added, “ But Helen is different to any other person ; she says she does enjoy dancing so, and she looks as though she did with all her heart ; as old Sir Andrew said, what she does enjoy, she seems to enjoy more than others, and she says always then her cheeks get hot, and her heart beats. That day she had been out with you, she told me she had never in her life enjoyed a day so much, for she had, though in a little degree, been relieving the distress in the world. And after the ball on Friday, when we were undressing, she said, ‘ Oh ! Emily, I have been in heaven to-night, perhaps that is too strong a term, but it was such true delight. I made up my mind for a few hours to forget the misery of the tried ones of earth, my short holiday is over, and now I must recall to mind the scenes of a sterner kind, which, although sad to gaze

upon, must yet, if we flinch not, bring with them 'hope,' and 'joy,' and 'liberty!'

"Why in the world did she want to bother herself about scenes of any kind at that time of night, or I should rather say morning?" asked Mrs. Monmouth.

"I said something to that effect, and asked her to make haste into bed, which she did, for she looked pale and tired; and when we had laid down, I said, "Helen, if scenes are sad and stern, how can they bring 'joy' and 'liberty?'" 'Do we not read,' she said. 'He whom He loveth, He chasteneth?'" 'But why think of that,' I answered, 'you are not chastened, are you.' 'No, dear Emily,' she said, 'but it is not of ourselves, that we must only think, we are told to 'weep with those who weep,' and 'to mourn with those who mourn.' Our Saviour bore his cross for *all*; he shared a marriage feast in Cana,

partook of their meat and wine ; yet did He not also share the widow's grief and desolation, administer peace to the seamen in the storm, comfort and hope to the woman in her sin ? ' I put my arms round her, mamma, for I could not answer at all, I felt it was all true. She said my arm did her good, for she felt very weary ; and if an earthly arm could give such relief, what must the support of the Heavenly One be ? "

" I dare say it is all very true, my love—dear me ! I have got this tulip wrong again—but I do think sitting reading to a dirty old man is hardly the occupation for a young lady, besides, I daresay he can read to himself."

" No, mamma, he told Heleu he never could read very well, and his sight has been very bad ever since his illness."

" But there are his wife and daughter. Surely Amy can read ; she went to the

Sunday school, and, indeed, I heard Miss Brown say she was a very intelligent girl."

"She has so much to do—makes nearly all the house linen for the 'Hall,' with her mother, and takes in other plain needlework. She keeps the cottage in beautiful order, Helen says; and you see, mamma, Helen thinks differently to other people; she says that reading to poor Dick is really more relief to him than anything she could give him."

"It is this thinking for ever differently to other people that I complain of. She will be an old maid, with all her beauty, if she don't take care; few men like a blue."

Emily could not resist a smile, for Helen had just refused the attentions, very decidedly, of a young man in the neighbourhood; and two or three others, she well knew, admired her very much already. Few could help it. But Helen was very

young, and the young man alluded to had not spoken to Mr. Monmouth, but intended to wait patiently, hoping to win at last. As Emily smiled, she bent lower over her work, feeling that her mother was in the wrong, but that it was useless to argue when two minds were so wide apart as those.

“I will go and see if she is lying down, for she is such a while upstairs; but I don’t think she would walk all round by the road; and if she went through the wood, it is not much more than half the distance, and nearly all shade.” So saying, Emily put up her wool and frame; for she thought, when she came down, it would be nearly the dinner hour, and tripped very lightly up the stairs, thinking, perhaps, her sister might sleep after her fatigue; the morning had been a very sultry one, and she was not strong.

While she is gently turning the handle of the door, we will look in. A bright and happy-looking little room is that, the sleeping apartment of the sisters ; it is over the back drawing-room, and the view from its one large window is beautiful and extensive. First, and foremost, there is the tiny lawn of their own pretty dwelling, so trimly and neatly kept ; its bright flower-beds and countless rose-trees all in full bloom now—the piece of water now glittering in the sun, freely supplied by the river, which winds picturesquely down from the chain of hills beyond—Helen's two swans, the gift of Frederick Beresford, are gliding upon it majestically. The garden was separated from the large paddock at the bottom only by an invisible fence, and on the right side was a thick briar-hedge, so refreshingly green, and so even at the top—on the other side of which, was a famous kitchen

garden ; and then, at a little distance, commenced a wood, intricate from its density in many parts ; and this extended for some miles along this side of the hills, getting higher and higher, till it terminated on the topmost in a large common, upon whose breezy heights it was Helen's delight, when she could reach as far (and she often did when staying a day or two at the 'hall'), to sit and inhale the pure air from heaven, its calm invigorating and softening influence. Then did her soul soar to its God, and pour out in rich tones of thankfulness her gratitude and praise—for the bright things of earth, its trees and flowers, the birds' sweet song, the glowing sky, and, lastly, but not least, the sympathizing heart—for, when that is found, it is the world's best treasure. There was but one that she had ever found, and that only within the last few years—since her parents

had resided at 'The Grove;' but more of that one anon. She dearly loved her brother; his nature and hers were congenial; on many points they felt the same; but his was not that one heart whose every echo responded to her own.

But we are leaving Emily a long while at the door; Helen was not lying down, as she expected. And now, reader, with your permission, I will introduce you to my heroine. She had drawn a little table close to the open window, the venetian blind was partially down, but the sun streamed in from one side, and lit up the little white hand and the head resting upon it, as with a glory. Her elbow was resting on the table, and, as Emily entered, her face could not be seen, the brow being laid in the hand. She withdrew it, however, and looked up. And now, see! is there not a world of nameless beauty in her coun-



tenance—beauty which regularity of feature alone could never give? It is a favoured moment to behold her for the first time, now. As Emily entered, a thought, radiant and bright as a seraph's own, had crossed her brain; it was hastily sent back to its fairy home, to be recalled and fostered another day.

“Helen dear, did you go to see poor Dick Caster?”

“Yes; I am very glad I went, too.” Her voice was as full of feeling as her face. “I am so glad I went, Emily. He has been so bad all night. Amy says she thought twice that he was dead. Poor child!—poor woman!” The large eyes were very humid as they were raised to Emily's.

“Do you think Frederick would like Dr. Baines to see him?” asked Emily.

“I went on there instead of coming

straight home, which I think has made me so tired."

"Mamma seems rather displeased at your walking so far on such a warm morning."

"Did you tell her the promise I made?" asked Helen.

"Yes; but she seemed to think there were so many at 'The Hall,' who could have gone without any trouble."

"I hold a promise a sacred thing, Emily. If poor Dick had died, and I had not been near him, I should think mamma would have had greater cause to feel displeased."

The eyes were brimming over now.

"Do not cry, dear Helen; mamma was only afraid you would spoil your complexion."

"A girl's complexion, and the life of one of God's creatures made in his image!" said Helen, a ray of indignant light flashing from her tearful eyes.

Emily had sat down on the large old-fashioned window-seat, and was gazing up over the ascending meadow-land, and, fine, widely-extending park of Belmore—'The Hall,' as it was usually called by the people in the valley and on the surrounding hills. When she turned her head again, the momentary glance of anger had subsided into a look of deep and painful sorrow; but, as if she did not wish it noticed, Helen rose, and, folding her papers, put them all neatly into a little ebony box—her figure and attitude the while resembling, in stateliness and grace, one of her own white swans.

"Is papa coming back by dinner time?" she asked.

"Oh, I never thought of that—I suppose he is, for there were no signs of laying the cloth when I came upstairs."

"Harry told me in his letter," said Helen,

“that he should come by that train to D——, on purpose, and try and get papa to leave London also then, and not meet that Mr. Dureau again—as all the talking in the world could not alter the case, and only worries poor papa more than he can bear. I thought, perhaps, mamma had heard this morning, for certain, if he could come.”

“He must be a horrid, *hard* man, that Mr. Dureau, if he will not give papa a little longer, for he seems so sure this investment will answer, when the money only once comes to try it with.”

“I cannot bear to think of it,” replied Helen; “suppose it should fail, as so many of his speculations have, where will he be, not only with regard to Mr. Dureau, but with my uncle also? How could he ever pay him all the money back?”

“It is no use always to look on the black

side, dear Helen ; to use a favourite saying of yours, ‘ he must hope for the best.’ ”

“ How kind it is of Uncle Monmouth to get this appointment in Calcutta for Harry—so very good—besides the loan of so much money,” murmured Helen to herself, without regarding her sister’s last speech. Emily did not hear her, for she was combing out her long silky curls, and seemed quite engrossed by her occupation.

Mr. Monmouth had one brother, the uncle of whom Helen had just spoken. They had been brought up as gentlemen, or it would be in many cases a truer phrase to say, *as fools*, with the knowledge and understanding that they were, and ever would be, independent of the world, in a pecuniary view, having affluent fortune and good standing in society. After the death of their father, they went different ways—both had entered manhood.

Henry, the eldest, married one of two sisters, co-heiresses, and shortly after their marriage agreed with his wife, that her sister, Diana, should reside with them. But the result of this arrangement was most fatal. The details were never accurately understood, but it was well known how Monmouth had pined for a child to his home, and heir to his wealth ; and in what a miserable state of health his lady had continued since her marriage ! often unable to fill even the light part allotted to her, Diana mostly heading the table ; and, indeed, as years passed, being regarded more by the household as mistress than its unfortunate owner. It appeared, from after- tales, that the poor wife felt this, more than one knew of then, but her great trial was to come. She had been prevailed upon by her medical attendant and his good lady, to go with the

latter a little tour, he, considering with some wisdom, that the change with care in travelling, might benefit her more than his visits and medicine, for her indisposition appeared chiefly on the nerves. It was a short time after her return home that a fearful conviction burst upon her, too shocking in its details to relate. Suffice it to say, that the spirit which had entered this dark world with her own, the same which had blotted her childhood's path, and dimmed her womanhood, and which in her great weakness she had not been able to dismiss, had now achieved her foulest purpose and robbed her of her right. When the cruel hint was whispered to her by a menial, she silenced the informer with contempt and anger. But when the truth glared upon her in all its horror, she fell as one dead. Feeling, dormant hitherto within her soul, was roused with full power then—her life was

given over. Then did the husband curse his tempter. Love which had for long been waning into pale indifference rushed back with warm fervour then, and with it remorse and shame. Her reason had fled ; for many weeks she lay unconscious—when her senses at last returned, she lay but a shattered wreck indeed. But she awoke to devotion she had not ever known—not even in her courtship—it was hers for ever now. Repentance held him down, poor man ! and bitterly did he mourn the sad deed he had committed. When able to undergo the journey, he removed his wife to India ; she lingered one year, and died, loving her husband better than she ever had done before.

John Monmouth had not, like his brother, wedded an heiress. At the age of two and twenty he considered that a good-tempered girl with a pretty face and lively chatty

manner, was the only appendage he required to render life very agreeable; and it was not till after years that he fully discovered the want of the true pure metal in the bauble he had now. A deep reader and thinker himself, he had not looked for these qualities in a wife; and that fortune which would have kept the family in easy independence with moderate expenditure, was well nigh exhausted by the thoughtless profusion of Mrs. Monmouth; in vain he expostulated, her love of show and abhorrence of being "out done," as she termed it, overcame any scruple; Mrs. Drew, her bosom friend and near neighbour, was her pattern in all things. Mrs. Drew gave three grand soirées each season, so must she—her carriage and horses must be in the same extravagant style; it was fruitlessly that Monmouth argued from their different means, how different their ways of living

should be. As we have seen, the end of it all was, that four years ago the Monmouths all left London to the great consternation of all their acquaintances, and settled in the little villa called the 'Grove,' in 'Belmont valley,' near the town or rather village of D——, in H——shire.

Mr. Monmouth was now a poor man, a good deal in debt; twice had he written to his brother for assistance, and each time the loan had been granted. In reply to the first appeal, the elder Monmouth had shown some sympathy, and begged his brother to accept as a gift that which he sent; but the second wore a colder import—there was no allusion to the money, although the notes for the amount were inclosed, and also a letter addressed to Henry, his nephew, and only one, whom he had never seen. In this he stated that he had secured for him a very good appointment in a first-class house

in Calcutta, as accountant ; named the time he should expect him to arrive, and every particular.

The time specified being the end of the year, there had been plenty of time for thinking and preparation. But before the second remittance was sent, Mr. Monmouth had been induced, encouraged by the first missive, to write for a much larger sum, to enable him to enter into a speculation which, if things turned but kindly on the great wheel of uncertainty and chance, would have paid all back with interest. This was the business which detained the father and the son-in-law in London now, at the period I write ; and anxiously, oh ! how anxiously did poor Monmouth wait, and trust that when the money needed should arrive he might, like the shipwrecked mariner, make one more effort to save himself, and, what was far more to him, all he loved from sinking.

CHAPTER VII.

It was a lovely evening. The dessert was still upon the long dining-table at the 'Hall' when Henry Monmouth and Frederick Beresford rose to go and enjoy together a long walk, and that communion of spirit which was so truly theirs. They left a cheerful scene, and those who felt tired, like Marion Grey, who had ridden some distance that morning with her betrothed, would have thought that moment as she did—that it was a pity to leave it; George Beresford,



who sat at her side, would have given the same opinion, of course. He was not Frederick's brother, nor was he a grandson of Sir Andrew's, but he was the son of a distant connection of Sir Andrew's, by whom he had been adopted, and had ever regarded the 'Hall' as his home.

Sir Andrew's chair is wheeled round partially from the table towards the long French window opening on to the lawn; the balmy breeze steals in, and just stirs the old man's silver hair: he has a countenance of benevolence, but the joyous light which once marked it has departed; there are lines of acute suffering about the mouth, of mind and body too.

"Don't be late, my boy," said he, as Frederick opened the door. "Be back in time for prayers."

"Yes," replied the youth, very respectfully. "We are only going up

to Dick Carter's ; Baines is afraid he will not last, unless a change takes place."

"Let him have all he needs," said the old man, in a mournful voice.

They are gone ; and now there are two at the table of whom I have made no mention. Miss Mabel is seated at the head, little changed since I first described her, although she numbers nearly thirty summers now ; still are there times when, in the flush of her singular beauty, she might be taken for little more than a girl. The other was a boy about fourteen, of a most disagreeable mien—it is difficult to describe him—there was nothing in itself peculiar about him, and yet his whole appearance *was peculiar* ; there was a kind of instinct feeling of dislike which you could not chase away, that took possession of you as you gazed ; his hair was of an ordinary shade of lightish brown ; his eyes, a kind of hazel,

with something of a slight cast in one of them; but his chief characteristic was, that he appeared to shun all observation. Accordingly, soon after the young men had left the house, he sneaks from the table so quietly—nobody seemed to see or hear him—puts on his hat, and is off also.

This boy was believed to be the son of a distant and poor connexion of Miss Mabel's, who had, about six years before, sent for him from Wales, and since his arrival he had been instructed by a private tutor; and only quite lately that tutor had left, after striving vainly for more than five years to make something out of him. What little of good glimmered in the boy, he found was overbalanced by what he deemed to be some secret influence; but he was rather a tame man, with but little perception in what occurred around him; and, although he freely acknowledged to himself

there was some strange mystery at Belmore, he never could in any way imagine the clue. There was one in that household though who strongly suspected it, and that was Mrs. Truman, the housekeeper, an office she had held during the latter part of the old lady's lifetime, and ever since.

We left our party in the long dining-room, the windows of which opened to the front of the old mansion ; which was very rambling, and covered much ground, but had withal an air of thorough English comfort and good cheer. It had been Sir Andrew's practice until quite lately to keep up the custom of his ancestors, and dine with his family in the great hall, which was very capacious, and had a large beautifully painted window at one end, of the ' Madonna and Child ;' at which, in his early childhood, Frederick would sit for hours gazing, fully satisfied that it must have been his mother,

she was so much more lovely than any of the other portraits hanging round.

Just now, George is assisting Sir Andrew with great care to cross the hall, to that suite of rooms to the left, from whence issues the sound of the piano, accompanied by a sweet mellow voice—it is Marion Grey's. The old man is soon seated near her, listening with evident pleasure—it reminds him of by-gone years. She is a gentle, intelligent-looking girl, now on a visit there. The young man is tall and fair, and he looks good and true. His great uncle has educated him for the 'bar;' and before they can be married there is much to be arranged. Marion's family live ten miles distant from Belmore; it is very numerous, but she will not be quite dowerless, for a maiden aunt has settled a small annuity upon her. They may not be very rich—but it is likely they will be happy. The windows of this

room open on to the terrace, which runs along the whole length of the building, at the back ; it is supported by stone pillars, and is like a colonnade, there being another terrace above it of the same length, and all the chief bed-rooms being on that floor, many of them have egress to it in the same way.

I mention this, for reasons which will be seen hereafter.

Up and down the lower terrace, now, a troubled spirit paces. Mabel looks another being from what she appeared half-an-hour ago, her brow is contracted, she turns short round when she approaches the windows of the room where the trio are ; her step is measured, and her mouth works as though she held inward parley with herself. At length her speech finds utterance in a deep, low tone—

“She shall never have him ! but my plan

does not work yet—I hope he'll be in time and not play the fool by the way. I have tried hard to train the cub, but he don't answer my expectation. I'll make him pay for his board, and his *being* too, ha, ha! or, I'll—— Ah!"

There was a shadow on one of the pillars; the voice, raised in exclamation, ascended to the upper terrace, and brought down over the stone steps, in great alarm, good Mrs. Freeman, who, though in her sear and yellow leaf, was activity itself still. She had been sitting working there, a favourite retreat of hers.

"What is the matter, Miss?" but her vision told her.

"Oh! it is only nurse Carter's poor idiot, he has been wandering about here these last ten minutes, and told me just now, he had come to catch the blight as it fell, that he might keep his fairies white!

Poor fellow ! I think the moon is at its full, Miss, that makes him worse."

"I wish, Mrs. Truman, you would not encourage such people as that, skulking about the place," retorted Mabel, in her coldest tone.

"Lor' me ! Miss Mabel, he has always been allowed to wander where he would, ever since he could walk. You know Sir Alexander took him into the library, and gave him a glass of wine and a bit of cake, only last Friday. I am sure he would not like the poor child turned off now," said the housekeeper, with some spirit; "He knows that Mrs. Carter always thought it was through nursing poor Mrs. Felix in her last illness, and the sight of her dying, that made him what he is, poor soul!" She turned to the idiot, "Paul, why don't you go home?" The wide mouth opened wider, and the dull eyes looked duller still. "Why

don't you go home, my poor fellow?" putting her hand kindly on his shoulder.

"The white dove's out of her nest now; she'll soon leave it, when 'll she come back to the ark? Not till the tempest abates. Heigh ho! heigh ho!" And with the echo of his silly laugh, he ran away. Miss Le Mort remained staring in the direction he had taken, until Mrs. Truman asked with respect, "if she could get her anything, she looked so pale?" She replied "Nothing, that boy startled me, I am better now," and walked into the house, by a door at the foot of the principal staircase, up which she slowly mounted.

The two young men took the path through the wood, which wound up the hill side, to Dick Carter's cottage. The sun was setting brilliantly, and through the foliage cast a heavenly halo. They walked on, engaged in earnest conversation, and as their energy

increased with their theme, the gestures of the two were very similar, and their deportment altogether not unlike. Frederick Beresford was taller by two good inches than Henry Monmouth, and decidedly by far the more handsome, for there was that aristocratic bearing about him, which no one could mistake; it said plainly, 'I am of high degree,' yet was there no false feeling of superiority depicted in his manly features. He looked several years older than he was; indeed, any one but an acute judge of character and its powers, would have taken him for the elder of the two. He bore his height well, for his figure was developed in proportion, while that of Henry, from great delicacy of constitution, was still the stripling, although he was the senior, by three years. Their topic had been their approaching separation; as the time advanced, neither of the friends would own to the

other the pang it cost him. When the subject of Henry's appointment, and all pertaining to it had been exhausted, they spoke of the much wished-for 'despatch' from India. "It will be due next week, I should say about Wednesday," said Henry. "Did you hear that rustling, Harry?" asked Frederick, "that's the second time I've heard it. 'No spies!'" he shouted, as he darted into the underwood, thick on either side, but quite dense upon the right. He came out breathless five minutes after.

"Are you mad?" asked Henry, laughing.

"I could almost *swear* somebody is making his way off on his *hands and knees*, by the movement of those bushes, in *there!*" said Frederick, his face pale with excitement.

"Why Fred, old fellow, you're getting nervous," laughed Henry, at this novel idea.

"Not I. You don't know this young scamp, Malcolm, as I do."

"But we left him very busy eating nuts as hard as he could," said Harry, still laughing.

"That is nothing, Harry. Once I thought I had left him safe in church; when seeing your dear sister Helen turn deadly pale and go out—she was quite alone there—I left myself, to see if I could do anything for her. I found her seated just at the beginning of this wood, three miles further down; and when she became better, and we were talking eagerly about your poor father's affairs, and moreover about my own, in which there is much that does not satisfy or please me at all, who should I see, on turning sharply round, but that young villain, just behind us! I told him I'd wring his neck if ever he found himself in that enviable situation, as *spy* upon me, again.

"What a strange fancy, to keep a low-

born boy like that at 'The Hall!'" said Henry. "Better far have left him on the Welsh mountains. She might have given his parents plenty of relief, without burthening herself with their hopeful son."

"Perhaps she didn't expect such a bargain; but it is a mystery to me altogether," answered Frederick, shrugging his shoulders.

There was a long pause—each seemed buried in his own reflections. At length, Henry broke the silence abruptly.

"I tell you what—I really do think, Fred, if I were, like you, successor to Belmore, and all belonging to it—and I fear it will not be long first—" He dropped his voice, and the other turned away his head. He loved his grandfather, he had been 'all' to him; and the thought of what must inevitably take place ere long always unmanned him. Harry's eyes were

also fall from sympathy. "But, really, if I were you, and there were those domiciled there so disagreeable to me, I should take an opportunity of speaking carefully to Sir Andrew about it. At your age now, I think you are entitled to do so."

"There can be no alteration during his life-time—at least, not with regard to Miss Mabel. I would not cause him more worry than I know and feel sure he already has, for all the world. I know what you would say," seeing Harry about to interrupt him. "I did once hint that I thought he would be more—*really master* there, and *happier* without her; and I shall never forget his look as he replied—'You do not know what you are saying!' It quite silenced me. I thought it so strange. She holds, undoubtedly, some unfathomable spell over him; and I begin to feel belief in good

Truman's suspicions, that he owes her no end of money."

"Money! and he so rich?"

"All is not gold that glitters, Harry," and Frederick shook his head.

"Well, there is one thing quite certain, from all accounts—that, however much you may share in the general dislike to *her*, she has a very different feeling towards *you*. Emily quite amused my mother the other day—girls will chatter, you know," seeing his friend look a little annoyed.

"Not *all*," said Frederick; "I know *one* who is *above* it."

Harry squeezed his arm. "We both do; but there are few like her—although *I*, her brother, say it."

"*Dear, sweet* Helen!" murmured Frederick. "Well, what was said?" he asked, smiling for the first time.

"Oh, there was no harm in what the

puss said. She merely related that, when she was up there, practising duets with Miss Grey, the day before yesterday, when they had finished, they went upstairs to put their things on; for, as you know, George and Marion came back with Emmy to tea, at our house. They were both in rather a 'larky' mood, as we should call it, these girls, I fancy—and, hearing some one in the gallery, Em (like her!) must peep through the crack of the door. Miss Mabel was hurrying along towards that long winding passage, leading to those rooms I have heard you say are never used."

"No, they never are, nor have been, since my poor mother's death. My father and she slept there, and occupied that part of the house a great deal. My grandfather has never been in them since, I believe—although my mother did not *die* there; she

died downstairs, in her easy chair—as I think I have told you?”

“Yes; ~~in~~ that room quite at the end of the terrace—was it not? It is seldom opened, is it?”

“Very seldom, and only by dear old Truman now, I believe. I see the window is opened always when it is fine; and the other morning, when I passed it, I saw a little bouquet of choice flowers on the table. But something whispers to my soul, ‘Who put them there?’ Kate had been up to see poor Dick, I was told—that was enough. Now and then, I do go in by the window, and sit in that old chair; but it is too much for me always to think of her, in her youth and beauty, sitting, as they say she did, at that window day by day—pining, after my poor father was drowned, till her heart gave way, and she was reunited to him, never to be so cruelly

parted again. Nurse Carter had not left her long, and was returning with her early tea; she heard a deep sigh, and the bright spirit fled! She was dead!—dead in her chair! Was it not shocking? I was in my cradle at her feet, and, what made it worse, my grandfather was away on urgent business.”

“Dreadful!—too dreadful to think upon,” said Harry. “I don’t wonder at the rooms never being used. But I was going to tell you, they saw Miss Mabel enter one of them, for they watched her down the passage; but, in turning from the gallery, she had, of course, to pass your picture (almost yourself, it is so like), and they saw her stop and kiss the forehead twice, and then march on.”

“Never mind! as long as it is not the original.” And they both laughed heartily; but a shade of sadness fell on Frederick’s brow, as he asked—

"What, in the name of all that's marvellous, could she want in that room?"

"That is just what Helen said, the other night, and 'that it was sacrilege for her to enter such a holy place.'"

"Bless her pure heart!" responded Frederick; "who could speak like that?"

The bye-path the friends had followed had by this time brought them to an open space of waste land; trunks of trees, scattered here and there, showed it had formerly been a part of the wood. This continued for about a mile to the left, where it was joined by the main road. Dick Carter's cottage was about midway, and, therefore, was now in full view. On emerging from the wood, the two friends stood gazing behind them, in admiration of the scene down the hill, enhanced in beauty by the golden clouds from the sun in setting. They were both attracted by an

object bounding up from the road, in the direction of the cottage, with the speed of a greyhound; indeed, Harry concluded it was one, for he exclaimed—

“He must have put up a hare or something.” Then, a moment after, as it advanced, he cried—“It’s not a dog! What can it be? By Jove! no man could run like that.”

“I do believe it is poor Paul,” said Frederick. He ran a little way, shouting to him; but they could see, though at some distance, that the idiot intended to avoid them, if possible; he was rushing on as if for his life.

“Stop, Paul!” cried Frederick, authoritatively.

The boy stopped.

“Where are you going in such a hurry?” he asked.

“The eagle! the eagle!” screamed the

idiot, wildly and breathlessly. "She is sniffing for her prey! The eagle! the eagle!"

"Put your arm in mine," said Frederick, taking no notice of his excitement, "and walk home quietly with us."

"Ha! where the white dove flutters?"

"Doves are not white," said Harry, laughing.

"Hush!" whispered Frederick. "Paul, who made this?" holding up a wild flower—tiny emblem of a mind so endowed that it thrives without human culture.

"Oh! isn't *He* a *great King*?—hasn't *He* got *jewels*—that's all! He'll soon have more—*lots more*! That's what I think when it's all dark. They peep at me, *there*!" pointing to the sky.

"Calm, calm! Poor boy!"—and Frederick drew him closer to him. "Tell me,

Paul, do you mean that the 'Great King' made this?"

The silly one took it, examining it closely; and then, with his vacant stare, gave a nod.

Frederick thought he had thrown it away, and they walked on to the cottage in silence. As they drew nearer to the neat garden surrounding it, a middle-aged woman, of clean and respectable appearance, opened the gate, and, curtsying, said, with a smile—

"Thank you, dear Master Frederick, for bringing my truant back."

Frederick did not answer, but put his hand in hers.

"God bless you! you look like *her* to-night," she said.

"That poor fellow runs as if he would break his neck, Mrs. Carter," said Henry, when they had entered the tidy little parlour.

She pushed her son into a chair, put back the dank hair from his brow, and wiped off the damp with her apron. "Sit there quiet, good boy, while I take the gentleman to see father."

But he rose, and followed.

"Mind what your mother says, Paul," said Frederick; he did not speak but crept after them up the narrow stair. The door of the room in which the father lay, was opened gently by Mrs. Carter, and a scene not unworthy of a painter's art, was before them:—He was lying upon a bed white as the driven snow, his hair fell back upon the pillow, and almost matched its whiteness; his hands were clasped, and his eyes raised to heaven; he looked like one of the ancient patriarchs. A young girl was kneeling at the foot of the bed, her face was not seen for it was buried in her hands, and her long, rich, auburn hair hung in masses on her

shoulders, it had escaped the comb which secured it at the back, usually so neatly. Opposite the door another knelt, her eyes were raised like those of the old man, and her countenance thus seen, could never have been forgotten by the beholder : pale as a statue, with intense feeling, as from her lips, the words poured forth in gentle harmony : "Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive, and let thy widows trust in me." Two hands clasped those of the old man, and a noble head was bent low. .

"Master Frederick, welcome !" was murmured.

His was a fine character ! There was not a rough-skinned, hard-working hand on that estate, but what in any affliction his own soft palm would press ; yet there was not a single tongue which would, in lightest talk, presume even to abbreviate

his name ; and this was saying much, when we consider, that many of those dependants had held him in their arms, as an infant, and that he had passed his childhood and youth in Belmore. It was always ' Master Frederick,' never ' Fred ;' there is much in this, it portrays a great deal—great love they all felt, and great interest for the poorest among them—for the orphan boy, who should e'er long, govern them and theirs, ' the monarch of all he surveyed ;' but those feelings were accompanied by a genuine reverence, which his deportment ever called forth ; it was no look of pride, but an innate something in the speaking eye of his most classical face, which made one feel *little* beside him, and that his mind must have been shaped in some superior mould.

While the prayer continued, the idiot had remained standing at the door, his meaning-

less stare fixed on Helen. When she had risen from her knees and shaken hands with Frederick, he held out his great brawny one to be shaken too; she took it kindly and said—

“Paul, there are some friends of yours on the drawers. I gathered them as I came along.”

He did not move his eyes from her face and she, concluding he did not understand her, pulled him to the bunch of beautiful wild flowers in a tumbler of water, and before she could prevent him, he had put them, wet as they were, next to his bare chest; in doing so, a crushed flower fell, it was the one Frederick had gathered—he pointed to where it lay, and calling out, “It shall rise again!” ran out of the room.

The sweet gentle girl whom we mentioned kneeling by the bed, and now so tenderly raising her father’s pillow, was his only

child beside poor Paul. She turned round uneasily, to impress silence upon her brother, lest his shrill voice should disturb their father, and overheard Henry say to Helen, "I never saw him so unintelligible," as he picked the flower up and put it in the water.

And Helen answered in the same low tone, "He is very strange to-night—but his words always seem to me like prophecies."

Amy now repeated, very joyfully, the good tidings Dr. Baines had given them that day, that he considered all danger over, and only rest and care was needed to bring the patient round.

After remaining a little while longer at the cottage, our party, in cheerful discourse retraced their steps homeward.

CHAPTER VIII.

AT the extreme end of the valley stood the church—a quaint little edifice, and covered with ivy. You came upon it suddenly, for the road turned abruptly to the right, and ascended all the way till it reached the village of D——. The wood ran along for some distance up the hill, proceeding from the valley : there was a gate opening into it just opposite the church, and this was a favourite resort of many a rural couple after service on a Sunday. About a quarter of a

mile up the road, was situated the house of the incumbent, Mr. Graham, a good and worthy man, much esteemed by all who knew him ; so, indeed, were all his family—they were respected and loved by the parishioners. It was this gentleman's son who had, not long since, proposed to Helen Monmouth, and had been, as you may recollect, rejected. 'Even in a small place like this, with so few inhabitants, there was no lack of scandal. Many considered Mr. Graham 'high church,' some went so far as to say they suspected in heart he leant towards Romanism ; yet he never deviated from the simplest form of prayer—and our church prayers are so beautiful in themselves, they require no ornament to their sweet simplicity, for they speak all the heart can have to say, or the soul petition. Perhaps these opinions had originated in the fact, that Mr. Graham was Sir Andrew's

chief friend, that he often passed hours at the Hall, and the knowledge that the Beresford family had been for generations past of the Roman Catholic faith; some concluded that Sir Andrew held the same, merely because they had never seen him at church—all the members of his household attended regularly. The church, encircled by its peaceful grave-yard, was a pretty and interesting object as you turned from the valley up the high road, but any admiration you might feel was a little damped by the sight of a small, dirty-looking ale-house, just at the corner of the turning to the right. It looked out of place there. So thought the stranger who had been standing gazing at the church for some minutes. He looked dusty, as though he had walked far. The fat landlord had been to the doorway twice to look at him, wondering if he was coming in to have a 'glass;' but his

second survey brought him to the conclusion, that the stranger, although he did not look a 'rich' gentleman, was a 'cut too high' for his domain, and that he was very likely going on to the 'Blue Boar' for his dinner. He was very ungenerously sending him and the 'Blue Boar' together to the very worst and warmest place he could think of, when the unconscious person crossed the road, and seated himself on the wooden bench outside.

"Can I have the *pleasure* of gittin' your honor summat by way of refreshin'?" asked the landlord.

He had rolled rather than walked to the door, his width looking too much for his height. He had such a jolly, good-humoured face that it seemed impossible to feel angry with him, even for persisting in remaining where he was. Mr. Graham had tried in vain to get rid of him and his noisy abode.

from that spot, offering him very liberal terms; but the house was his own, and he would not 'budge,' as he said, for any 'parson.'

"I am obliged to you," replied the stranger, who was a tall, solemn-looking man, perhaps about forty years of age; "Can I have a chop or something here? I have walked a long way, and the inner man requires satisfying—the outer one is thoroughly so by your country around."

He spoke slowly, so precisely, that the landlord, who had supposed him an artist before, and about to sketch the church, fancied he must be a methodist parson. The former conjecture proved right as far as he could judge, for the gentleman handed him a rough sketch he had made, and told him he must be served as soon as possible, for his time was short, having to travel some miles by the train which left D——

in two hours time ; it was then nearly two o'clock.

“I will see what can be done, your honour, but we don't do much in dinners here—we ar'n't had our own yet to-day, for my old woman's got a large wash.”

So saying, the landlord retired through a door at the back of the bar ; there was another on the right hand ; and, as the stranger entered, he noticed the word ‘parlour’ in large letters above it ; he peeped in ; it was a long, low room, with a sanded floor, there was a table in each window, both of which looked on to the wood ; it was not empty, there was one occupant, a gaunt-looking man, with a slouched hat very much over his eyes ; he was smoking, and, from time to time, knocked the ashes out of his pipe in a moody way against the bars of the grate, and re-filled it, mechanically it seemed, frequently spitting into the fire, although there was a spittoon at his feet.

The new-comer was not taken with his appearance; and, when the landlord returned, after stating that his 'missus' was just preparing their own meal of 'boiled beef, greens, and taters, if that 'ud suit his honor,' he replied in the affirmative, and asked if there was no other room wherein he could dine.

"I am sorry, 'your honor,' that our best parlour is *particularly* engaged just now," (it was a bouncing fib, that being the only one the place possessed) "but you'll be all to yourselves there, sir, in that 'ere window—it won't be long a comin'; but my son, who we're a bringin' up to the 'waitin' line, has been to D——, on a errand, he's a cleanin' of himself to attend to ye."

The hungry traveller suggested that he could dispense with this ceremony, if the landlord would just put it on the table, as he was in such a hurry.

He replied, grinning, "That he was a good waiter when he was young, but he was so corpulent now, he should be twice the time that his son would be a-doin' of it."

The poor gentleman, seeing there was no help but to wait patiently, by way of passing the time, asked the host how many children he had.

"Oh! only *him*, thank my stars," was the answer, "it's hard enough to keep one, sir, in these here times."

"That is a very wrong notion," said his auditor, more solemn than ever, shaking his head as he spoke, "we are sent into the world, my good man, to accumulate—to multiply.

"Certainly, sir—*certainly*, your honour," promptly returned the landlord, looking quite humble and penitent for the erroneous opinion he had given.

A greasy-looking female head, surmounted

by a cap which had once been white, was here introduced in the door-way.

“Just go and thrash that rascal, father, will you? I’ve had to wash them greens myself, I can’t get him down. Sam!” she screamed, “there’s all the clothes a boiling over—come and help with the dinner, you young jack-an-apes!”

“Sam! Sam! come down,” called the father, “the gentleman’s a waitin’.”

“All’s serene,” was the rejoinder from a shrill, impudent voice upstairs; “I must sew on these here buttons, I s’pose, first, or maybe I’ll astonish the native!”

“You see, sir, we bring him up useful,” said the complacent father.

“I hope he will not be long,” answered the hungry traveller.

He had not to wait much longer, for the boy in a few minutes laid the cloth, and verified his father’s assertion that he was

much quicker than he could have been, and the stranger sat down to his meal. He glanced now and then at the man by the fire, who sat silent for some minutes longer and then walked into the bar, and looked at the clock ; he seemed waiting for some one, and at last, by his restless movements, appeared getting impatient ; there was a something so forbidding about him, that the solemn gentleman had no inclination to address him. At last he rang the little bell beside him, for the boy to clear away, and let him know what he had to pay. He was startled by a burst of uproarious merriment from the man at the fire. The boy who was thick-set like his father, and bid fair to be as big by-and-by, appeared from a door leading to the kitchen, at the further end of the room, with a cullender on his head dripping with green-

water, and his mother's gown and apron on. He was a most comical imp, and showing off now in all the love of foolery, he was bustling up to the table to clear it, with every antic he could think of, as he afterwards said, "to astonish the grim old curmudgeon's nerves, and digest his dinner for him;" when the noise brought his father from the bar.

He was going to join in the mirth, when he was checked by the grave wonder on the face of the strange gentleman, which in fact added to the merriment of the others; getting up his ire, he demanded, angrily, "What the fool was about?"

"Get out with you this instant! I'll teach you how to behave before your betters!" So bawled the landlord, rolling after his offspring as fast as his proportions would allow him. This the boy thought, truly, the most ludicrous part of the scene, and gave his

father chase round the room, dodging him about, and encouraged by the hearty laugh of the smoker, and the faint smile glimmering at last upon the face of the other, went on, till the landlord sank puffing and breathless into a chair, trying in vain to get out invectives against his unnatural son.

The boy soon disappeared with the things, and the traveller succeeded in gaining the attention of the host, saying that he wished to have his little account, that he might be off on his way.

While waiting for this account to be made out by the unintelligible hand of the disordered landlord, a man entered, evidently the one expected by the other. If the former was ungainly in appearance, this one was ill-looking indeed ; there was that ' ruffian air ' about his visage and muscular form, which made one shrink at his gaze.

"How very late you are, Bill!" was the greeting he received.

"I'm tired—and the first thing I do, 'll be to wet my whistle."

"Have you walked all the way then? you said *two* o'clock, and it's past *three* now."

"Well, what the —— was the use of my coming on, unless I—"

"Hold your tongue!" hissed the other, pointing over his shoulder with his thumb.

There was a pause, and our stranger could see that they eyed him curiously. He paid what he owed and departed, saying to himself, "These men are after no good, I shouldn't like to take this walk to-night, after dark."

During this time the late comer had taken a long pull at the tankard set down before him by the knowing Sam.

"Now for the news!" he exclaimed.

"Oh! I suppose it's much the same as usual," said the other sulkily, "next week, or the week after."

"Are both those doors shut?" asked the first speaker, rising to see that they were so. "No by ——!" uttering a terrible oath. "*It has arrived!* they will receive it to-morrow evening."

"By Jingo—well done! Are you quite *poz* about it?"

"*Poz* and no mistake, the *name* and the *foreign post mark*."

"Bravo! how I should like to have seen you in your toggery," said the other.

"I did cut it, *rather*, I can tell you—and now, my part of the job's performed, I suppose I'm to cut my 'lucky,' and betake myself to the shores of France as speedily as possible?"

"Those are her wishes, her *commands*, I should say," answered the other.

"Well, I wish we could have gone together, it would be more pleasant."

"If I were you, I should be glad enough to get away now. I wish I were clean out of it, that's all I know; it's an ugly job."

"Yes, ugly enough in its way, because there's no game in it, and we don't know what cause we're working for."

"*Cause* ! why a good reward, I'm sure."

"Yes, but mine's the *least*, and I think I'm entitled to as much as either."

"Well, well man, you'll not hurt," answered the other, in a coaxing tone. "I shall go up there to-night, of course, and say all I can for ye. Ah ! that reminds me, has the letter been posted for *her* ?"

"All right, trust me for that, and it's all I've done makes the real spring of the plot."

"Well, I'll get more than the agreement said, for you, if I can," answered the

other. "In the mean time, make a good meal, and get away as fast as you can."

"But is'nt that cub coming?"

"Yes, I expected him at three o'clock; but did not tell him before that, because I thought it best to chat without him."

The other looked as if he didn't agree with him; he rang the bell, however, and ordered his repast to be brought in immediately, and had hardly began, before Malcolm Lee was to be seen opening the gate from the wood.

"He was down here last night," said the last speaker, and told me from what he had overheard on his 'watch,' as he calls it, that they did not expect the despatch before next week."

"Well!" said the other, with his mouth full. "I should think the young woman had received the letter by this time, telling her of the dear boy's mother's danger and desire

to see him before she dies. Ha! ha! ha! and so you're going to play Romeo and Juliet again to-night. If I were as good-looking as you," continued he, laughing, "I'd make something out of that."

"Hold your tongue!" was the reply. "She has always behaved well to me and mine, and I will have no more of this."

"I meant no ill, comrade," said the man, apologetically, as the youth entered.

They both rose, and asked deferentially how he was.

"Bring in a pint of brandy, Sam," said Malcolm, "and then I want to be quiet, and arrange some matters with these two good men who start for Wales, my dear native place, to-morrow. I have had, or at least, my benefactress, has had a letter this afternoon, informing me of the dying state of my mother there. And I hope to get there soon after them myself. Morgan, I

can trust to you, having been on our estate so long," he addressed the man who had been waiting there. This speech was evidently intended for the ears of 'Sam,' why had lingered to catch all he could, and then went into the kitchen to say, 'that of all the young squires he had ever heerd on, Master Lee from the 'hall' was the most *crack*, that he never forgot his old friends,' and 'he should think Wales must be a much better place than England, anyhow.'

When the door was shut upon the two, there was much said and arranged, towards the completion of the villanous scheme they were engaged in, at the head of which, perhaps it has been already seen, was Mabel Beresford. The man, whom we described drinking was he, whom the boy believed, in his heart, to be his father, he had lived with him from his birth, till he was ordered to England, and Miss Mabel ever spoke of him

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to the boy as his father. Some months before the present period, she had sent for this man, under the pretence to Malcolm, that his love for him, was so great, he could not live any longer without seeing him; the boy attached to him at his early life, poor and wretched as it had been, and quite unfit, and averse to the sphere in which he now moved, was soon bound to strict secrecy regarding the man, and never addressed him as 'father,' but as 'Morgan,' only meeting him in his poor lodging, or in the ale-house where they now were. He had been brought up in cunning—there had never been a saving hand to shield him from the wreck to which he hastened. The ascendancy the wicked woman whose passions form this epoch of our history, had gained over him, cannot be wondered at, when all the circumstances are considered. During his sojourn at Belmore, he had had,

by degrees, instilled into him the same spirit of revenge against the Monmouth family which actuated herself—only on a very different footing, in reality. He had been made to believe that a great wrong had been done him, or rather, his parents, from which he suffered now, by this family—that all their poverty might be traced to that, and that to prevent them from receiving what ought to belong to him, was his just right. Working as she had done upon a naturally vindictive spirit, she had fully gained her ends.

If such a holy thing as love could find admission into one so lost, it had rivetted its chain in Mabel's heart with iron strength for Frederick Beresford. The feeling was not love, in its own soft light, it was a burning fire—it fed upon her being, and gnawed her reason. She was a woman whose passions were deadly—she had no power over them, nor had she

sought for any, from the only source from whence it flows. She fully believed that he, and Helen Monmouth, were secretly betrothed—no word had passed between them of such import. Yet, she was right, for the eye had told what the tongue had not dared to utter. And, in her soul she swore, they never should be one. The only chance, she thought, under which they could ever have been united, was this premeditated undertaking of Mr. Monmouth's, which, from all accounts, would prove a fortune could he secure enough capital to embark in it. That evening, at dessert, Mabel handed to all round the table, a letter which she had that day received from Wales. It was written in a common, but neat hand, informing her of the dangerous illness of Malcolm's mother, and she asked Sir Andrew's opinion about sending the boy off at once, as delay might be fatal.

He, always the first to accede to good-feeling, urged the step she proposed.

* * * * *

It was late, about twelve o'clock, perhaps, for all was dark about the place, and every light seemed extinguished. There was a closet in Mabel's room, leading into another large one, and this opened into the room, down the passage we have spoken of, and seen her enter once before. Her shutters were shut, but her light was burning, and she was standing in a listening attitude, attired as she had been when she left the drawing-room more than an hour ago ; presently she heard something for she stole gently through the closets and entered that chamber. There was a form close against the long window, on the outside, she opened it, and admitted the man Morgan.

There, in that room, hallowed by the love

of two of God's chosen, did these wicked ones plan their infamous designs—in the dead of night, all sleeping peacefully around them, did these evil spirits hold continual conference. Their mutterings could not be understood but to themselves—sentences here and there might be defined. “Pantry window,” “he can just get through it,” “don't leave him till he's safe off,” “money shall be faithfully sent.”

The window was silently closed, and the woman trod stealthily back to her room—to sleep?—Ah! no,—to pace the room distracted with suspense.

CHAPTER IX.

A FEW days after the events related in the last chapter, about four o'clock in the afternoon, the little party at the Grove were just preparing for a walk to Belmore, when Frederick Beresford arrived with the pony phaeton; it was very warm, and he thought the walk would be too fatiguing. They enjoyed the drive very much, Harry sitting on the box with Frederick, and the two girls behind; the ponies ran along well, for they knew the kind hand of their young master.

The Monmouths were surprised to hear of the departure of Malcolm Lee.

“Miss Mabel had gone with him,” Frederick said, “to H——, as there was a branch line there; he was to go by train as far as some place she mentioned, (he had forgotten the name), and there, a friend of his parents was to meet him and take him the remainder of his journey home.

“Good riddance to bad rubbish,” exclaimed Emily.

“But I suppose he’s to return, like a bad penny, isn’t he?” asked Henry.

“Well, from what Marion said, I should think not; it seems George took the liberty of saying to the ‘goddess,’ (as Miss Emily calls her) ‘that if he were her, he should let Malcolm remain where he was going, as he seemed much more adapted for the sphere he was born in, than the one she now moved in,’ and she, to their surprise, appeared to agree with George in his opinion.”

It was a merry party, that day, round the old dining-table. Marion Grey, who headed it in the absence of Miss Mabel, was finely joked, and called 'Mrs. Beresford,' much to her own smiling confusion, and the amusement of the rest; even old Sir Andrew was beguiled into joining in the joyous laugh ringing around him. The constraint usually felt there was removed. Helen was as witty as usual, and her remarks called forth many a burst of merriment. It was only a keen observer like Frederick who could see that her gaiety was forced. She did indeed feel in wretched spirits, which she tried in vain to conquer. At last the old man seemed to notice her depression. She was sitting next him, and he put his arm fondly round her, and said—

“ My bonny Helen looks a *pensive* beauty this evening.”

The kind tone was all the over-charged

heart needed to give it relief; her eyes filled as she remarked—"It was very foolish to feel so low, when all around were so happy."

All knew that she was far from strong, and naturally hysterical, so no notice was taken; but Frederick rose from his chair, at the bottom of the table, and, re-filling her glass with port wine, bade her, in a gentle tone of authority, drink it off at once. She did as he desired her, and then Sir Andrew observed—

"I wonder we should any of us be in such spirits to-night, for the heat is oppressive. I begin to feel it myself." His countenance changed as he spoke, and he looked far from well. Mrs. Truman was summoned, as usual, for he was very subject to these sudden turns now; and, after advising him to retire to the quiet of his own room for a time, she looked beam-

ingly round the group of pleasant faces, and said—

“It is quite a treat to see and hear these dear young people; it will do Sir Andrew good, but I fear it has been a little too much for him.”

Frederick aided her in assisting the old man to his snugery, as he called it; and, after he was re-seated, Henry remarked—

“What a good soul Mrs. Truman is!”

“She is indeed,” responded Frederick. “I don’t know what Sir Andrew would have done, or I either, without her. As long as she lives, there shall be a home for her at Belmore.”

“That’s more than I’d say for one of its occupants,” said George.

Frederick looked a little annoyed at the allusion, and Helen changed the conversation.

Marion and Emily were playing a beau-

tiful duet, accompanied by George on the flute, Henry turning the leaves. The music sounded delightful to Helen and Frederick, who were standing on the terrace looking at the strange aspect of the sky. Along the horizon was a deep red line overhead; and, to the left, floated masses of dark cloud as on a sea of gold, assuming various and strange forms; while to the right, over the wood, all was as dark as night.

“Yes, we shall have it before long; and, if I’m not mistaken, it will be a fearful storm when it does come. Are you afraid of it, Helen?”

“I like to look at it, and yet I do feel afraid of the lightning when it is very vivid.”

“It is far better not to look; besides, it is dangerous. Why, you are better already! My receipt has done you good.”

“Is it not magnificent?” exclaimed Helen, still gazing.

“Yes ; but I don’t think you must stand too long ; you can sit down here on the balustrade.”

It was supported by rows of little pillars, and all along, between the large ones, were pots of sweet-scented flowers ; but a space was left, here and there, for anyone to sit down, if they felt so inclined. The gardener had just been watering, and the moisture from the plants smelt quite refreshing, for the air seemed pent up and parched.

“What a dear old place it is !” said Helen, as she looked down on to the extensive lawn with its bright flower beds, and large fountains playing—its many shady walks and grottoes here and there.

“It is,” sighed Frederick, “and only wants, ere long, to claim its lovely mistress.”

She turned her head away ; her cheek tingled, and her heart fluttered.

“If I could only feel sure that I, with it, might be so blessed,” continued he, taking her hand. Their eyes met.

“Frederick,” she said, summoning all the resolution in her power, “we must not speak of these things now, we are both very young; *you*, as a man, must see more of the world first (do not interrupt me—I know what you would say)—*I* am surrounded by doubts and uncertainty; if papa should prosper, and all go well——”

“Then you will——” began Frederick; but she stopped him.

“Say no more about it now, I beseech you. I feel a presentiment to-night; I know you would tell me it is wrong, but I cannot help it, it is strong within me; that I have much to go through—God give me His support!”

“He will, dearest one; but drive these fears away. I will not say more now, as

you do not wish it, but I shall consider the compact sealed."

"No, no! Frederick, pray do not; many things may happen."

"Nothing that could change —"

"How beautiful these flowers are," she said, hastily, wishing to divert him.

"Yes, but there is one beside them fairer still, the one *I have gathered*; and, although it may have storms to go through incident to its mortal state, which may cause its lovely head to droop, '*it shall rise again,*' by the warmth *treasured here* to restore it," (pointing to his heart) "and bloom with all its native luxuriance."

He was leaning against the pillar close to her, and with these words he stooped down and imprinted a kiss upon her brow; it was the first time he had ever done so, and the deep blush the action occasioned was succeeded by such pallor that he looked alarmed, and feared she was ill.

“It will soon pass,” she answered, rising — “it was only a shudder came over me.”

She leant on his arm, and he led her gently on. What was it made her cheek grow pale, and her form tremble? The words of the idiot, when the crushed flower fell from his bosom, rushed back with full force to her memory now, ‘*it shall rise again.*’

They had now walked slowly to the end of the terrace and back, when Henry joined them, saying—

“The girls will have it that it is cooler in the house than it is outside ; but, for my part, I think it is insufferable anywhere. If it is like this in India always, I think it will soon do for me.”

This speech led them back to the old subject—the expected letter from Uncle Monmonth, and Helen said—“She could not tell why, but she had a strange mis-

giving about it—either that it could not arrive safely, or that there would be something wrong with it when it did.”

“The fact is,” said Henry, “you are in a silly, nervous mood, little ‘sis’ of mind—shall we duck her in the pond, to bring her to her senses, as I did that Malcolm Lee when we shot her favourite cat, Fred?”

Helen laughed—that was what he wanted.

“We will, if she is a naughty girl, and does not change this mood,” said Frederick; “but, I think,” added he, seriously, “this heavy atmosphere always influences sensitive people; I am sure it does her to-night; but she has those by her who love her so, that for their sakes she will endeavour to chase the gloom away, and be her own bright self again.”

“I will,” she said, and they began to talk of Malcolm—to argue how glad they were that he was gone for good. “It is

very wrong to dislike anybody," said Helen, "but there was a something about him which forbade any interest concerning him—there was no redeeming quality; and, when I meet with those people, I wish them well and pray for them, but I never want to see them again, unless they are altered."

"I heard you talking to him once, Helen, in the wood, in a way that I should have thought would have changed any one from bad to good."

"Poor boy! he seemed blind even to the beauties of creation; he would not admire a leaf or shrub. I could make nothing of him; but, Frederick, I have heard Mrs. Truman say how you talked to him, sometimes, by the hour together, and never seemed to heed, although she said it was like listening to an angel from heaven."

"I am afraid I have not done all I

might," answered Frederick ; " but I quite discarded him after our old dog ' Leo ' was found poisoned ; for I consider strong suspicion fell upon him."

" ' Judge not, lest ye be judged,' " said Helen, in a low tone.

They had reached the extreme end of the terrace, and, as it was quite dusk, Frederick said he thought Helen had better go indoors ; but she had such a wish to watch the moon rise from behind a cloud, that Harry ran in to fetch a shawl for her. The room we have named, where Frederick's mother died, was just behind where they stood. Helen turned suddenly to call to Henry that she really did not need the shawl, when she stopped short in her speech, and, with a kind of scream, fell, almost fainting, into Frederick's arms. There was a bustle for a chair—for water—sal volatile ; all were round her before she had recovered.

"Dear Helen," said Frederick—who was almost as pale as herself—"I am afraid you are very ill!—what was the matter?"

"Oh! that face—that face!" she whispered.

"Leave her to me, Emily—George—leave her a minute with me, alone, please; she was frightened at something we were talking of, I think."

They left her with him.

"Now, Helen, say, what alarmed you?"

"I cannot!—it was only my own stupid brain—oh, dear! that face!"

She put her hands over her own, as if the spectacle were too awful to contemplate.

"What face?—explain, dearest—I pray you to explain."

"I will," she whispered. "It was at that window," pointing to the one where Frederick's mother died.

"My dear girl, your nerves are in a

highly agitated state ; nobody ever goes in there."

"Yes—I think they are agitated to-night—I am better now—oh, dear ! "

"But what was the face like, darling ?" he asked.

"Oh, it glared upon me like a demon !—and yet !—truly, I must be dreaming—I was thinking of her, I think—it was the face of Mabel Beresford."

"Impossible, dearest ! I don't think she has returned ; but stay, I will soon set your mind at rest."

He opened the window, and jumped into the room ; the door was fastened on the outside, as it always was ; he came back laughing, and told Helen, at some future day, they would laugh *together* at her strange fancies now.

"But I can easily understand it, Helen ; your mind is on the stretch, and has been for

some time, for your poor father ; let us hope all will prove well."

They went in ; the hot water and tumblers were on the table, with some slight refreshment. Frederick asked if Miss Mabel had returned ? " Yes," Marian said, " about twenty minutes ago ; but she was so tired with her journey, and looked so ill, that I persuaded her to go to bed at once, which she did, for she began to undress before I left her, and said, ' She hoped you would not think her rude, but excuse her coming down, as she was so tired.' "

Frederick looked at Helen, and whispered—" You see to what lengths nervous feeling may carry you—try to overcome it."

Henry overheard him, and said—" What would she do in trouble ? She would be undone at a trifle ; in great emergency, she would shine like a star."

Frederick had ordered the carriage to be

at the door to take them home at half-past ten o'clock ; the timepiece on the marble slab, had just chimed the hour, when Mr. Wilton Graham was announced, the clergyman's son.

"You're a late visitor, but welcome as ever," said Frederick, returning his friendly shake of the hand.

"I am late, and should not have intruded at this hour, had I not been made the bearer of a message to your guests."

There was nothing striking in his manner or appearance ; but he had that genuine look of good humour and affability about him, which rendered him a general favourite.

"Your father," he turned to Henry, "has good news for you, and wishes you to hasten home, if Sir Andrew will allow you."

"Has it arrived ?" asked Henry.

"It has !" Helen clasped her hands together, and murmured, "thank God !"

Emily ran up-stairs to put her bonnet on. Marion lingered with Helen, whose tears so long controlled, gushed forth now, with joy.

"I fear I have been too abrupt." said Wilton, anxiously.

"Oh, no! you have taken a load off my heart."

"Then, I am quite sure I have made my own happier for many a-day."

There was nothing particular in this speech, of itself; but Helen noticed that Frederick looked from one to the other, and she could not help feeling annoyed with Wilton for making it; although she was obliged freely to forgive him soon after, for during the drive home, he entered so heartily into all their hopes, and talked so sensibly with Harry about their father's views. Still, she had rather he had not said what he did; she was so afraid Frederick might think something had passed between them; and

having so decidedly refused young Graham's attention, she had hoped never to have the affair reverted to again. He left them when the carriage stopped at the 'Grove,' to make the best of his way home. And they were soon congratulating their father, whose pleasure at the receipt of the loan, had been a little damped by the letter which accompanied it. It was written coldly and sarcastically, and plainly stated this was the last time assistance could be sent. The writer insinuated that his brother must be living in wanton extravagance to require the aid he sought; but, in conclusion, he added, that if Henry left England for India at once, he would provide for, and find him, some employment, till the vacancy he had secured for him should be at his service.

Helen felt her colour rise as her father read aloud the letter.

Mrs. Monmouth with her usual smile, said "The old miser!"

And Emily looking very contemptuously, exclaimed: "Why we shall have it all someday—we may just as well have some of it now."

"Don't make too sure of that, Emily," replied her father; "your brother, in my opinion, is the only one of you, who will have any. There is one thing certain," he continued, "since he has this opinion of me, my principal energy must be aimed, at paying back with interest all I owe him."

"That is right, father," said Henry, "and before I do leave, which I suppose I must soon, I should wish to see you start safely on your embarkation in this business."

It was always a trial to Monmouth, to think, even, of parting with his only son for a period so undefinable; but he conquered this natural feeling as much as possible. The fact of his brother having sent for

Henry augured good for him, at all events ; and knowing how he had fruitlessly longed for an heir, thought it not impossible as he had no child of his own, that he might in the end, settle the greater part of his wealth upon him, and the father had no misgiving that his child would not be approved of,—nor could he well have, for Henry Monmouth, while he was a perfect gentleman, was a thorough good Christian, and clever man.

They had a long conversation, the father and son, after Mrs. Monmouth and the girls had retired to rest ; and arranged to go up to London on the morrow together, to receive payment for the bills sent, amounting to two thousand pounds ; but Mr. Monmouth said he should rise earlier than usual, to write to his brother an acknowledgment of the receipt of them, and disclaim the accusation he had so cruelly made ; at the same time thanking him

gratefully for his intended kindness to his boy.

Henry went round as usual, seeing all fast for the night, while Mr. Monmouth took the letter, with the bills enclosed, and laid it in the private drawer of his cabinet—locked it, and putting the key in his pocket, walked up stairs, followed by his son, to bed.

Soon, all was quiet in that little abode, and its inmates, for the most part, locked in slumber; but Helen was very restless, and turned from side to side; at last she started up, exclaiming,

“What was that noise?”

“I hear thunder,” said Emily, gaping; “this is the second clap—it is coming nearer, I daresay.”

“I don’t think what I heard just now, was thunder,” said Helen, “it was like a man’s voice.”

“Oh! Helen, dear, I'm sure you cannot be at all well to-night—why, you seemed all right again, when we were undressing, and laughed as much as I did about your quakes and fears—I shall get out and mix you some sal volatile.”

She was crossing the room towards the window, when a vivid flash of lightning illuminated everything in it, and the gardens and fields beyond.

“Good gracious, Helen, you make me as nervous as you are yourself! I could have declared that was a man's shadow on the lawn—and, after all, it's only that tall rose tree, I know. Here, drink this, I have made it pretty strong.”

Helen took it—and the storm seemed lulled for a time—for they heard no more of it now, but were both, soon after, in sound sleep.

CHAPTER X.

THE storm had begun—but its rumbling echo came from afar—it was evidently raging somewhere in all its violence. The bright glare ever and anon illumines the objects around. What is that man doing? He is pulling something from that small round window. Surely it is the figure of a boy! All is dark. There is a whispering. “Have you got it?” “All right, but it’s the last job I’ll do to please that woman; my knees

knock together." The man held a flask to his lips, and then bid him put it in his coat pocket, and run as fast as his legs could carry him.

"I shall do as Bill said, and stick out for this," said the boy, holding up the letter.

"You'll do nothing of the kind," replied the man angrily, almost forgetting his caution. "You'll get to 'Black Bush,' as fast as possible, deliver them papers, and then make away with all speed, as you have been told to do, through the forest to H——, take the train to L——, where Sam Surl will bring you on if I'm gone—unless the lady's altered her plans about you. Now, be off—quick!"

The fitful glare bursts again, and the man stands a second to watch the receding form. There is a kind of momentary pang shoots across his hardened heart, as he mutters to

himself, "The first step to the gallows for him, is taken." In about twenty-four hours from that time, Morgan was sitting at his ease, in his own cabin, in Wales. The part of the wood to which the boy was hastening, could have been traced by none but those who knew the intricate windings of the labyrinth; in many parts there was no vestige of a path; but he pushed on, through the trees, till he regained it, from time to time, apparently, well versed in his way. Unmindful of every obstacle, he toiled on till he reached 'Black Bush.' It was a kind of break in the wood, and a wild spot indeed. Why it was so called, nobody knew, except that all around it looked black in its density. Some would have it there had been crimes committed there; some that it was haunted in consequence. What with one report and another, it got shunned more and more, year by year, so that it be-

came at last a very wilderness, and looked as though a human foot had never pressed its sward. The forest stretched away to the left, and gipsies were encamped there in various parts, but even they were known to share in the superstition concerning it. There were giant trees there, whose gnarled roots spread far and wide: on one of these, weary and worn, now sat the boy. Although the skin is swarthy, and the hair changed to black, and the garments are like those of a gipsy, the face is Malcolm Lee's. He has emptied his flask; he takes off his cap, and pushes back his hair.

“I'll be paid well for this—Bill's right. I might, perhaps, turn these papers into account—‘finding's keeping.’ I'd soon bolt with them, only, if she doesn't see them, father won't get the rest of the reward. I'll stand my ground though; father shan't know I've got them; he only says they're

no good, because he wants me to give 'em up."

A woman's form now is stealing through the thicket.

"Here she comes."

He rises from the tree. She sees him, too, and holds inward soliloquy as she approaches.

"That disguise would never do ; it is as I expected. I should know him anywhere. Fools that they are !"

They are standing face to face. He has begun his dogged strain, and claims the papers as his right. She stares fiercely at him, hardly crediting her hearing ; he never dared speak so to her before. The revulsions from fear to hate is working strongly within him now ; "he would be her cat's paw no longer." She laughed satirically, and asked 'what good the papers would be to him ?' but her contempt seemed to en-

courage him in his daring, for presently he swore he'd 'split,' if he did not have them.

"Only dare to say that again!" she cried, stamping her foot, while every muscle within her seemed bursting with passion. She had on a long cloak, from the folds of which she was drawing something slowly. Had she come prepared? Good God! yes—it is a pistol! but the boy sees it not.

"I do say it again, and I mean it too!" he shouted in defiance.

There is a report—he has fallen! but the deadly sound is almost swallowed up by the deafening peal from the angry heavens above them, and the blinding flash which makes the woman reel! Would that it had killed her then! She snatches the letter from his stiffening hand, but cannot look upon the deed that she has done; and with swiftness, as though a legion had pursued her, she hurries on her way. The tempest

has arisen to the height of its fury ; the rain descends in torrents ; the wind howls around her ; the birds, scared, fly from her path !—on, on she goes.

At four o'clock that morning, when the storm was abated, and the soft grey dawn spoke to the innocent, of the love, the joy, and peace attendant on another day—to the sorrowing of fresh hope, faith, and patience—Mabel Beresford passed through her window, on the terrace, with madness at her heart, and the brand of Cain upon her brow !

It was about seven o'clock when Mr. Monmouth descended to his library. The storm—although it had not been nearly so severe there as at a few miles distant—had been sufficient to awaken him some hours before, and he had not slept since. He had lain, revolving in his mind all the circumstances connected with the important step



he was about to take, the schemes he had formed, to make even more by it than had already been conjectured could arise. It was in the manufacture of some article—flourishing now, and likely to remain so for some years to come—that he had engaged with another, who was to be the working partner. Monmouth felt that he also ought to devote part of his time to it, and consequently should not be able to remain so far from London, if the affair progressed, as it was most sanguinely supposed it would ; he ruminated whether it would not be wise to take a furnished lodging for a time, nearer the scene of action. He well knew that his wife would object to this, and that she would hold out to the last against it.

In early life, Mr. Monmouth had studied the medical science ; always a book-worm, this had been his favourite subject, and he had conceived a great taste for the profes-

sion ; his two chief friends were brought up to it—he had studied with them; and, more for the love of the knowledge than anything else, he had passed his examination with them. He was highly complimented ; in surgical cases, he was told he bid fair to excel ; and, encouraged by this, without having had any view of the kind before, had made up his mind to practise for amusement; and thought, could he but get that pretty little smiling girl, and a nice house and grounds near some country town where he could thus occupy his time, he should feel perfectly happy. But the pretty, little girl would not hear of this arrangement at all, she would have him if he remained a gentleman—an independent gentleman—but she never would be a surgeon's wife ; she must have a nice house up at the west end of London, near her school-fellow and friend, who had lately made such a splendid match.

So all Monmouth's plans had fallen to the ground.

Since their removal to Belmore Valley, he had more than once officiated for Dr. Baines, during his absence, when the case was urgent ; and, now and then, a poor person would come to him for advice. But he felt no desire now, to begin so late in the day, what he had reluctantly resigned so many years ago. He had naturally an active mind, and felt to require some stimulant for it, even when in comparative ease. It was the failure of a speculation he was engaged in, that had brought his affairs, which were already embarrassed, to a crisis, four years before, when he left London. Another speculation of a similar character had succeeded to a degree, but still he was already in debt to one of its members, a Mr. Dureau, of whom mention has already been

made. But he earnestly hoped that in this last venture, he should be soon enabled to pay off all old scores, and begin to raise his head with trustfulness. He had also indited the answer to his brother's letter, as he lay ; and he felt exhausted from so much thinking, and want of rest, when he came down stairs ; and, after placing his writing materials in readiness, he sat down in his arm chair, and ringing, ordered the housemaid to bring him a cup of coffee. He had just swallowed it, and rose to unlock the drawer, in which he had placed the letter the night before, when the girl entered to inquire if she should bring him another cup, and was horror-stricken to see her master standing like one transfixed, his eyes starting from his head, and his features wearing a look of agony. The drawer was open—the papers were gone ! There was a thin slip, left in their place, on which was written,

“It is useless to search—you will never have them.”

He stood rivetted, staring first at the drawer, then at the slip of paper, unable to move or speak. The girl flew up-stairs to her young master's door, and called lustily, “That somebody had broken in, in the night, and stolen his pa's letters.”

It was heard by all, and soon, a group of white puzzled faces were clustered together round the distracted man. Every window and door was examined, but there was no clue to the mystery—and how the person could have gained an entrance, or in what manner the papers could have been secured, appeared truly miraculous. Many a time was the little pantry window passed, in the search, but everyone knew no man could get through that—it was up over the shelves, and was usually left open for air. One of the drawing-room windows was

found unfastened, but the shutter was shut. Emily went up and down, over and over the place, till she was obliged to give up for very weariness.

For some minutes, as we have said, Mr. Monmouth remained stationary, while all the questioning, suppositions, and exclamations were going on around him. Presently he signed for all to leave him but his son. Mrs. Monmouth, alarmed at her husband's silence and his blanched cheek, lingered; but Henry said—

“Mother, you had better go; he wishes to speak to me alone.”

As soon as the door was opened, the strong man bent his head upon his son's shoulder and wept. A woman's tears are sad to witness, but those of a man—and of one who through life has had the power over his feelings, in most instances to control them—are a heart-rending sight indeed.

Henry was overcome, but bore up well. "Something must be done, without a moment's delay," he said. "I will first send for Mr. Graham—he will come directly, I know—and consult with him. The police must be informed of it immediately."

But his father shook his head. "It is useless to search, you will never have them," he repeated from the paper.

Henry examined the writing well, but it was in a small round text hand of no particular character, and from which he feared no light could be thrown on the matter. He, however, persisted in its being put into the hands of the police at once.

Mr. Graham hastened to them, accompanied by Wilton. After some conversation, the two servants, cook and housemaid, were summoned to the library, questioned and cross-questioned by Mr. Graham; but not the slightest suspicion could be found

attached to them in any way, except purely from the extraordinary circumstances of the case. Wilton had gone off with the slip of paper to the police-station at D——. The news of the mysterious robbery soon spread, and all means were taken for discovery. Mr. Monmouth had scarcely yet spoken; he seemed stunned and bewildered.

“What is to be done?” said Henry to Mr. Graham. “Do you not think it would be better for all of us to leave England together? I never can quit them in this wretched plight. What is my father to do?”

“Would that I could go with you!” interposed the father. “But, my boy, you forget that I am in debt—that, moreover, I have nothing wherewith to pay our expenses out.”

“This furniture will fetch a good deal,” said Mr. Graham, encouragingly; “it is,

for the most part, good and handsome. Your friends would contribute, and relieve you of it, without the publicity of a sale. You have *many*, remember, my dear Monmouth, even in this little place."

Mr. Monmouth wrung his friend's hand. "I feel your disinterested kindness, dear Graham," he said; "but it would not, I fear, do much more than cancel the principal debt I owe, for there are not many remnants of my good old stock here. Still, what things there are, are, as you said, very good; but there are other little matters which would have to be settled, and the passage out for myself and family could not be taken under two hundred pounds, I presume. No! I am a lost man! O God!"

"He will support you, dear papa," said Helen, who had stolen in, and stood behind his chair. "We are never tried beyond

the strength which He gives us, if we pray for it."

"Alas! my children!" cried poor Monmouth, his lip quivering.

Mr. Graham, much moved, walked to the window; he turned suddenly, on looking at his watch.

"The first thing you must do, Henry, is to go to London, and stop the payment of those bills sent by your uncle. You have just half an hour; take my horse; you will catch the ten o'clock train, if you do not delay; and although it will be late, still, you had better get back to-night."

The father caught his son's hand—he had never felt to cling to him so much as he did now in his hour of need.

"Pray, be back to-night; but you must go to Jefferson and tell him I must be released from the engagement."

His voice faltered; and, ringing the

hand he held, Henry kissed it, and departed.

Before he left the house, however, he tore a leaf from his pocket-book ; and, hastily scribbling a few lines, sent it off to Mr. Frederick Beresford.

Mr. Graham remained some time in kind discourse with Mr. Monmouth, endeavouring to soothe all in his power the blow he had received. By degrees, he became much calmer ; and Mr. Graham, who, at last, left to attend to his ministerial duties, was satisfied that his friend was a different man from what he was when he had entered the house two hours before. Helen remained there ; she had an innate feeling that her father found comfort in her presence. He paced the room continually, after Mr. Graham had gone, and relapsed into silence ; but, still, he looked more composed. She thought it best not to disturb his meditation ; and, accordingly, sat down and wrote

an account of their distress to Marion Grey, directing it to her aunt's, as she was to leave the Hall that day. Helen had proved the opinion given concerning her the night before—for, strange to say, though naturally of such a sensitive nature, and now almost choked with grief, she had not shed a tear.

After the first astonishment and excitement had subsided, and they had left her father, Mrs. Monmouth, with Emily, had gone back to her bedroom to sit, and deplore, and wonder upon the disaster that had befallen them, expecting Helen would follow. But she fastened herself in her own room; and, although she could plainly hear her mother's and sister's sobs, her eye had remained dry; she knelt at her bed-side, shaking in every limb, but seeking strength and support where alone it can be found. At length, she arose, and, bathing her burning forehead, and smoothing her disordered

hair, was about to descend the stairs, when Emily, opening the door of her mother's room, exclaimed—

“There she is, mamma ! Where have you been, Helen ? Oh, what shall we do !— what shall we do !”

“The best we can, and leave the rest to God,” said Helen, almost reproachfully—for this continued display of Emily's, seemed to her weak and childish. Helen went on her way ; and Emily, turning to her mother, observed—“She did not believe Helen felt it at all.”

“She need not be so ill-tempered at a time like this, I think,” said Mrs. Monmouth.

‘Ill-temper,’ what a convenient word that is, applied, oftentimes, by those whose shallow minds cannot pierce the veil, or approach the depth of another's ! What is ‘ill-temper ?’ It is, in itself, a disease,

generally owing its origin to a disordered stomach, or weak and irritable nervous system ; it should be treated accordingly—early watched over, and carefully dispelled. It becomes a deadly evil when it has taken root in a vindictive and remorseless heart ; linked with that, it is not within the power of man to overcome it, until, by the grace of God, that heart is purged and cleansed. Its first ungoverned stage is wanton cruelty, which too often leads to crime and madness. But the term is very often given by one person to another, whose thoughts and feelings he is alike unable to appreciate or comprehend ; who does not smile when he does, and cannot view things in the same light with himself ; instead of blaming his own dullness, he throws a slur upon a mind far higher and nobler than his own. Such unmerited censure should always be taken in silence from the contemptuous source from

whence it flows. Helen could not help feeling this as she went down stairs, her mother's remark rang in her ears, but her heart was filled with resignation for the present, and resolution for the time to come.

Alas! how often had the same repulsing feeling intruded itself upon her since the dawn of reason first peeped upon her childhood, and the pang that feeling had occasioned had been Helen's first sorrow; for, woven in her being, was her deep love for her mother—that love had been in years past acute, even to poignancy—and bitter was the trouble to her soul, in the thought that one so beloved, so idolized, in heart of hearts, should be found by her, as she was compelled within herself to admit, to be sadly frail and wanting. In her early years, she had read with dismay the truth, that her mother was 'the rock' upon which all had split—her father's position in the world,

his comfort—his hopes for his children, and their future welfare. She well remembered, when her brother left school, the scene between her parents. Her mother stood her ground to the last; her father got warm—vociferated, and yet she won the game;—she would have her son—her only son—a ‘gentleman;’ and so he was, in every respect; but the father won his more praiseworthy game, and the boy, thanks to his parent, had become well read, versed in literature, book-keeping, and other endowments, rendering him well fitted for the post he was now called upon to fill. Helen well knew she was no favourite with her mother. Since the first gleam of her memory, she had perceived a marked difference in her manner to her, and to her sister; it appeared absurd, yet, at times, she could almost fancy her mother was jealous of her. *Jealous of her own offspring!* This seemed to Helen

an enigma, indeed ! She drove the hideous phantom away whenever it darkened her pure mind ; but her mother so frequently would say, in a tone of displeasure, that “she must be too forward, or her papa would never address all his conversation, as he did, to *her*, seeming to forget that she and Emily were in the room sometimes.”

Helen was not forward, in word or deed ; but she had that good, refined sense, and true feeling, so appreciated (by a sensible man) in the ‘weaker sex,’ when it is found—but which is so often, unhappily, warped and crushed in childhood. Helen knew her father well, and dearly loved him ; but his want of firmness had ever been apparent to her—yet, even this was only half uttered to herself ; for a parent’s actions were, to her, sacred things—nor did she wish to probe them. It was only within the last two years that they had parted with the

governess, who had been with the girls since they had quitted the nursery. They had received lessons from masters, also, in London ; and, since their removal they had both been engaged in the study for the greater part of each day, until quite lately. Monmouth had seen more of his daughters than he would have done in the vortex of London life, and he had learnt to watch with pride the opening bud—the one which promised to expand into such choice blossom on some future day.

Helen had hardly overcome the effect of her mother's speech, as she sat there at the writing-table. She blamed herself that she had answered Emily so quickly ; but she could not admit that she had in any way acted wrong ; yet, such was her nature, that this little event worried and discomposed her as much, in comparison, as the greater one had done.

"It is dreadful to be so misunderstood," she thought — "to have one's words and actions misapplied ;" and the words of St. Peter came like sunny balm to her wounded spirit :—"What glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently : this is acceptable with God." And so this soothed her. A horse's feet were heard on the gravel, speedily approaching.

"Here is Mr. Beresford," said Helen.

"My dear, it will unman me. I cannot see—" but before he could finish his sentence, Frederick was in the room, deep sympathy glittering in his dark, and speaking eye. Helen thought she had never seen him look so nobly handsome, as when he took her father's hands within his own, and said.

"I truly grieve for you, Mr. Monmouth." He then turned and pressed her hand ; but

could not speak. Mr. Monmouth again overcome, sunk in his chair.

"How did you hear of it?" faltered he.

"Henry despatched a little note to me before he left for London—has he gone?"

"Yes;" replied Helen, "not much more than an hour ago, you have lost no time," with one of her bright smiles.

"No, I came off directly, thinking I might be of some service, I did not even wait to tell my grandfather the sad news, I am sure it will shock him greatly."

Seeing the cloud gather deeper on poor Monmouth's brow, he asked.

"Will Henry see Mr. Ross, as he intended, to-day?"

"I should hardly think so now," replied Helen, looking towards her father.

"Why not, my child? this terrible misfortune, which has befallen us, must not prevent your brother, from gladly availing

himself, of the only chance open to him, for his future well-doing in life. I think I know what Mr. Beresford intended to say, that young Ross could take out to your uncle, a letter containing the full particulars of this extraordinary loss, and also of my utter helplessness."

"Just so," said Frederick. "Surely you do not entertain the idea of what Harry hinted at, in his note?"

"That of our all going with him?" asked Helen.

"Yes," said Frederick, "we should surely all contribute to assist you, till your uncle is made aware of what has happened. I do not think Harry should leave you in a plight like this."

"You take a wrong view of the case, although I feel, and duly appreciate your kindness to assist," said Mr. Monmouth.

“But, after all that has passed, the almost insulting letter, received from my brother, yesterday, I could never apply to him for aid again. Henry must hasten to him as soon as he arrives in India, and give a full explanation of everything; if he disbelieves him, I cannot help it. Sometimes I cannot help thinking there is a snake in the grass, influencing him against me—or may be the domestic care and sorrow, (I know he bore in his wife’s life-time,) has hardened his heart against its better feelings. We were never what some brothers are to each other; still, we never disagreed. He has strangely patronized my son, that may be his way of evincing his wish to serve me, and he may think that sufficient. He has a great deal of landed property in India, and may intend, hereafter, to enrich him; therefore he must now do as he desires, and go if possible, by the vessel which shortly sails

for Calcutta. Mr. Ross, the first mate, (whom you saw here last week) is an old school-fellow of Harry's; his uncle is also living out there, and I believe is intimate with my brother. Harry will therefore have a friend, on the way out, and when he gets there—would that it were only possible for me to accompany him! It appears to me the only advantageous step left me to take. I should get into the army there, as surgeon, I believe directly, from what young Ross told me the other day. I should be in the same country with my beloved boy. I should have no fears for his success, and if anything happened to me, his mother and sisters would have a protector. It would be a rough life for them travelling there I fear; but their own good sense would teach them, that it is the only wise course for me to pursue, and they would willingly bear the inconvenience for my sake. "At least, I know *one* who would."

Frederick's eyes followed his to where Helen was sitting, with her head bent down upon the table, her face concealed by her hands. She raised herself, when her father paused, and said, answering his fond look.

"Indeed, I would!" Then glancing at Frederick, she saw one large tear ready to roll on his manly cheek—it was too much; and she arose and left the room.

When she returned, her father and Mr. Beresford were conversing about the sum the furniture, &c. might fetch. Mr. Monmouth was just saying that he had a large number of valuable books and prints warehoused in London, and the worth of them would make a great addition; as, also, would that of some rare trinkets of Mrs. Monmouth's, with which, he was quite sure, if she saw the necessity, she would be induced to part; in short, she must be *compelled* to do so. This was a decisive speech

for him, and Helen thought what a pity it was his decision had begun so late. "But *all*," he added, "allowing the very utmost we could hope to make, would only defray the trivial expenses naturally incurred around us here, and, maybe, carry us to our destination; but there would the debt hang, like a mill-stone, round my neck still; therefore, it cannot be." His face grew haggard as he spoke. "What I am to do, I know not."

"Excuse the question," apologized Frederick, "but are you very much in debt?"

"I owe my brother much, *all* of which, I fear, I can never repay; but I will endeavour, please God, to do so by degrees. But I owe to another besides him—one who distrusts me; for I have owed it *long*. The party's confidence is evidently—and, perhaps, naturally—shaken in me; what will it be now? The first thing I would have done, had all

gone well, would have been to pay that man ; for he has of late become even threatening."

His frame shook with agitation. Helen raised once more her tearful eyes to Frederick's : she was greatly surprised and dismayed at what she heard, not having been at all aware that affairs had arrived at such an extremity.

"Will you tell me the sum you owe him, and not think me impertinent?" asked Frederick.

"*Many hundred pounds,*" answered Mr. Monmouth, covering his face with his handkerchief.

Helen looked at Frederick. His eyes were bent on the ground, as if in deep thought ; but there was that in his face which convinced her that he intended to get that money for her father. He soon after took his leave, begging Mr. Monmouth to com-

pose himself, and promising to come down again at night, that he might see Henry on his return. As he left the room, he signed to Helen. She followed him into the little tasty drawing-room. He shut the door, and then taking her hand, said—

“Helen, tell me truly from your heart, do you feel fit to undertake this voyage your father meditates—to undergo afterwards all that his situation would necessarily impose upon you? You do not know, nor can you conceive, all you will have to go through.”

“It is my duty to go through all,” she answered; “sufficient for the day shall my strength be.”

“I will have no equivocation!” exclaimed he, almost angrily. “I asked about your strength and feeling, not your duty; your strength is tried to its utmost now. I have a right, remember, Helen, to watch

over your future, and if this will injure you in any way, to guard against it, for my own sake, as well as yours."

"I will have no engagement of any kind—no bond, even of speech," replied Helen.

"Many things may happen."

"Do not speak so prophetically, as you did last night, or I shall tremble for *my future*," he said, while a faint smile played round his mouth; "but as you will have no bond of speech, as you call it, I may consider I have one of the heart; may I not, Helen?" he added, earnestly, as she still continued sad.

The trembling 'Yes' was whispered at last, and the weary head sank upon his breast; there let us leave it in peace awhile. It will be long ere it finds again such resting-place.

CHAPTER XI.

DURING his ride home, Frederick Beresford turned over, again and again, in his mind, all the features of the mysterious occurrence of the past night. The more he pondered, the more puzzling and incomprehensible it appeared. He would not at all share in the suspicion, still entertained by Mr. Graham, Mrs. Monmouth, and Henry, as Helen had told him, that either the cook or the housemaid—under an impression, that they might turn these papers to account—had taken

them, and then, when the report was raised of their disappearance, had either hastily burned, or destroyed them, in some way, or else, secreted them. The slip of paper, left in the drawer, seemed proof enough to him, that it was no ordinary robbery that had been committed ; and he could not believe any servant had been the perpetrator, unless employed by some other party. That some malicious hand had been at work, he felt certain ; but whose it was, or wherefore, he was totally at a loss to conceive, for the Monmouth family were held in universal esteem. He dwelt upon Helen's strange misgivings of the previous evening, and could but wonder in his spirit, at the decree of the Almighty. He did not attach much importance to the noise she had spoken of, or the man's shadow Emily had fancied on the lawn in the beginning of the night ; for he knew the storm had been hovering round for

hours, before it burst upon them. And they had not had it so powerful there, as it had even been up at Belmore, and it was far more severe still at a few miles' distant. But he remembered thinking to himself, in one brilliant flash of lightning, how, if he had been at all given to the tremors, he might have fancied that a muffled figure flew past his window on the terrace; as quickly as the sudden light which revealed it. The venetian blind was down, but had not been closed, it was outside the window, as all were, along both terraces. He believed it to be merely the effect of the storm on his waking senses, for there is always something awful in its approach. But the impression was not agreeable, and he soon after got out of bed, and closed the shutters as the lightning increased. This was a thing that was never done or thought of at Belmore, nor indeed by any but very few.

of the inhabitants of the valley. The Monmouths brought the habit of 'seeing all fast for the night,' with them from London, and still adhered to it. But for many years before, no such thing as a robbery had ever been heard of. There was such a small community, that all appeared to know each other, even among the very poor who were, for the most part, Sir Andrew's tenants. From the village of D——, hard by, which was large and straggling, occasionally vagrants strayed, and gipsies were frequently seen about; but their spoil consisted chiefly in game, and poultry. The present event was indeed a novelty in this quiet spot, and caused a very great sensation. Frederick was by no means superstitious by nature, he could see that Helen, naturally imaginative, looked upon the past with unfeigned fearfulness—nor did he wonder when he thought of her forebodings beforehand. Yet, the

subject became, even to him, quite irksome in the darkness in which it was enveloped; and he strove, at least, to drive it from his mind, and give all his attention to the relief of the ruined family. Another idea took possession of him too; he thought, would it not be better in the interview he intended to have, immediately, with Sir Andrew, respecting the aid of which they were so much in need, for him to open his heart at once, and tell his love for Helen; and to express his fears, that in the event of their assistance enabling Mrs. Monmouth to leave England, her delicate frame would not bear the rough and adventurous life before her. He thought Sir Andrew would consider, and perhaps rightly, that he was too young for marriage then; but he knew of old the generous heart to which he appealed, and felt sure that his request would be granted, that Helen should remain.

at the Hall, under his protection, until she should authorize him to protect her himself, for the few years which might intervene, before she became its mistress.

Years ! he trembled at that word, for he keenly felt that Sir Andrew's life was of short duration ; but even in the event of this great loss, he could, he reflected, get George and his wife to reside there, till they should be united—and during that space of time, how joyfully would he shelter, from each rude blast, the 'sweet flower he had gathered.' He never, for one moment intended, or supposed it to be the intention, of Miss Mabel to remain there, after his grandfather's death ; but now, as the subject recurred to his mind, something told him that he should have more trouble than he had ever thought of before, in getting rid of her—especially, if she, as he had but too much reason to fear, had conceived a

fruitless passion, for himself—then did the blank vista open before him, to which this latter thought always led. All there, was doubt and uncertainty. He had seen enough to convince him that she held some powerful influence over his grandfather, and that at his death, he felt sure something, to him, would be revealed, of which now, he was kept in ignorance. But putting all in its worst light—supposing the estate to be found greatly encumbered, and he, in fact *poor* ; surely, with strict economy, diminution of establishment, and persevering attention to his affairs, from the numerous rents, from houses and lands, yearly accumulated, much might be restored—of this, he did not despair. Still, the theme had brought his mind into no enviable frame, when he reached the hall.

“Sir Andrew has not been down at all, to-day,” said the old butler, following him

into the little room, in which the old man usually sat.

"Not been down at all, John!—does he feel worse to-day?"

"No sir, not worse; Mrs. Truman does not think he has been quite himself, since he left the dinner table yesterday. She wanted him to see Dr. Baines, but you know sir, how his honour dislikes him, so he would not let her send."

"But, better send to Dr. Sherwood, from H——, if Mrs. Truman thinks it necessary."

"Is that Mr. Beresford?" called Mrs. Truman, from the stairs.

Frederick went to her.

"What a dreadful thing this is, Master Frederick, is it not?" she asked.

"What—the robbery? shocking indeed; but John tells me, Sir Andrew is not well."

"Oh, it is nothing more than usual, I

think, poor dear creature. You know once or twice last week he did not leave his dressing-room, and I persuaded him to remain in there to-day, for he did not appear to me fit for the fatigue of coming down. He has been taken a little faint, twice, this morning. I left him about two hours ago, for Miss Mabel said she wished to sit with him, having some matters of consequence, which must be settled, to-day. She had those great account books under her arm as usual—I don't think she has done him much good, for the last time I was rung for, he was some time coming round. She told me, not to tell him of the bad news about poor Mr. Monmouth, for it would be too much for him, she thought, then. I don't want to be disrespectful, but I think, that whatever it is she has been talking about, seems to have upset him as much as that would

have done. Poor old gentleman ! he can't bear much now, I fancy."

"What can she have to talk to him so much about, Truman?" asked her young master, much perplexed.

"I can't tell, sir ; it is a riddle to me," replied the housekeeper. "I only know, when I went into your room, an hour ago, to put away some of your linen, I heard her voice going at a fine rate ; but the walls are so thick, I couldn't hear a word. I'm ashamed to own it, sir, but if I had been able, I should have *listened*, for the *first* time in my life, I can truly say."

Frederick made no answer to this speech, but passed across the gallery. Mrs. Truman had been at Belmore during his grandmother's life-time, and was, as he believed her to be, in his inmost heart, a truly good and conscientious woman. He had always

felt real love for her, for she had taken a mother's care of him in his infancy. She had had *her* better days in life, but married badly ; and Sir Andrew, who had known her in his boyhood, offered her the situation there, which she had retained ever since. Frederick knew she was one who would speak the unblemished truth, and, therefore, he could rely, as he fully did, on all she had told him. He bit his lip as he approached his grandfather's dressing-room. His own room was the one next to it, that he had occupied from a child. He went in there for a few minutes, to consider how it would be best to break the tidings to Sir Andrew, whom he knew well enough to be certain that, should he find out that they had kept the knowledge of what had transpired from him, would be much vexed ; for he could not bear to be considered in any way incapacitated. Had he not known

this as he did, he would even then have hesitated, for fear of the effect the relation might have upon him.

Henry Monmouth was a great favourite of his, and Kate was his especial one; he felt much interest in all concerning the family; and Frederick made certain, as he sat there, that if it were in his power, he would, without a second thought, be the willing donor of the sum of Mr. Monmouth's debt, 'if he had it in his power?' He knew his grandfather was not rich; he had often told him as much, when lamenting that he could not allow him a handsomer allowance than he had hitherto had. But it was sufficient for Frederick, who had, since leaving college, remained quietly at Belmore; his chief amusements being reading, coursing and shooting; and, lastly—but not least—doing all the good he could among the poor around.

“Oh! surely he has this trifle to bestow!” thought Frederick—Helen’s tearful eyes before him giving him courage. “I will not allude to the other matter to-day, but wait to see the course events may take.” He was not prepared for what followed.

On entering the dressing-room, he found his grandfather pale and exhausted.

He took his hand and kissed it, as he always did, and sat down by him, after saluting Miss Mabel, whom, he observed, looked very fatigued and poorly.

“I do not feel quite well,” she said. “I think my long drive yesterday over-tired me, and this strange news about the poor Monmouths to-day has quite finished me, I think. I will go and lie down a little, and shall be better by-and-by, I dare say, and able to cheer you up, I hope; for I cannot compliment you on your looks,

this morning ; but it is enough, indeed, to upset us all."

She gave him one of her blindest smiles as she quitted the room. Alas ! for the depravity of human nature !

"Grandfather, have you heard of what we were speaking ?" he asked.

His grandfather knew all about it ; Miss Mabel had been telling him, he said ; and he quite agreed with her view of the case ; but, as she said, 'people could never see things as they were.' "What was it ?" he asked.

It was much the same as Mr. Graham's had been, Frederick found ; only that, in her opinion, the housemaid was certainly implied to be the guilty party ; "she did not see how it was possible there could be any doubt about it. It was only the other day, she had heard Emily joking with Marion Grey, about the love-making between the

young man they employed to garden, and their pretty housemaid. Of course, that was how it was, the thing spoke for itself; the young people wanted to get married, and, having heard such a fuss about this foreign letter, and the value it contained, naturally thought it might prove as much to them; *she* broke open the drawer, there could be no question about it; and *he* was outside, to receive it from the window. If *she* had anything to do with it, she says," continued Sir Andrew, "she should have that girl taken up, anyhow."

"But what does she say to the slip of paper put into the drawer?" asked Frederick.

"Oh! why, of course, boy, *that* was done to throw off suspicion."

He could not help remarking, that his grandfather's manner was more stern than usual, and that he did not appear to feel any of the sympathy so natural to him.

"She says very truly," Sir Andrew continued, "many of these common men write very good hands now. Ah! she's a *sensible* woman—a *very sensible* woman!" repeated Sir Andrew, "and sees through things faster than many men would—the right sort of woman to head a large estate—few would dare to poach on her grounds—a fine, magnificent woman to boot! *very*," he soliloquized.

Frederick was wondering what Miss Mabel's charms had to do with the heavy loss of the poor Monmouths. Nevertheless, the opinion she had given was so similar to Henry's, and Mr. Graham's, that *he* began to think there seemed some reason in it; so that it would be wise to have the housemaid given into custody at once upon the charge. He would mention it to Henry that evening, if no light were thrown upon the subject before they met.

"I suppose Marion and George have left, grandfather, or Marion would have gone down to the Grove, I am sure."

"Yes, they left this morning ; and I hope to see them before many months have passed, return, joined together ;—I hope to be permitted to see it," he added, gravely. "How does poor Monmouth bear it all ? —and what is he going to do ?"

This was a question Frederick had expected before, and could not help thinking that his grandfather would have felt far more for his friend's affliction, had the particulars been related to him by any other party. He explained, now, all the circumstances of Mr. Monmouth's condition ; and, as he went on, he observed Sir Andrew became much moved ; this was the time, he thought, to strike the iron while it was, yet hot ; and, glowing with energy in his cause, and hope for its fulfilment, he spoke of poor

Monmouth's debt, and how he had trusted and relied on his grandfather's generosity and kindness of heart, to defray it, enabling his fallen friend to go out to India, with an irreproachable name, and there honourably earn a subsistence for his family."

He stopped in dismay, observing the convulsive working of his grandfather's features, and had his hand upon the bell; but Sir Andrew motioned to him not to ring, and pointed to some hartshorn and water on the table. After he had drank, he lay with his head back in his chair for some minutes. Frederick saw that he had revived; but his lips still moved, as if in prayer; at length, he opened his eyes, and said—

"Frederick, you must give your whole attention to what I am going to say; and, if I have to stop at times, do not ring, or make any fuss, if you can possibly do without; lock that door, and sit down here;"

he paused, looked agitated, and then resumed—"I need not say, because *you* know, of all others, with what joy and gladness I should have done what you have asked. I pity poor Monmouth from my heart; but, to come to the point, which I must do, '*I am no less a beggar than he!*' Do not start, or look like that, or I shall be unable to proceed; I had agreed, with another, that it would be advisable to wait till this sad affair of our poor friend's was settled, although the time has, indeed, fully arrived that you should know *all*, of which I myself was not aware till this morning."

"What can you mean, grandfather? A beggar! surely you are mistaken. I could not be ignorant, from all I have seen and heard, that Miss Mabel's property has gone far to keep this large establishment—carriages, horses, &c.—and enabled us to live in the liberal profusion in which we do;

but if you were at once to drop this style of living, and limit your household to just the attendants requisite, curtailing all unnecessary expenses, surely you could soon retrieve much. As to a beggar! that you could never be, with fair play : all this extensive property, wholly and solely your own—it is impossible!”

“It is not impossible, young man,” answered the old one, with more asperity than Frederick had ever seen in him before. “Answer me! how are we ever to repay her all the vast sum she has expended upon us? Talk of Monmouth’s debt, ha! ha!”

“I do not know, I am sure,” said Frederick, trying to keep very calm, feeling alarmed at this unwonted display of bitterness in his grandfather. “I only think it a sad misfortune, that you ever agreed to her doing so much in years gone by; for, as you say, I really cannot conceive how it is ever all to be repaid.”

"Shall I tell you?—ah! ah!"

"Pray compose yourself, grandfather," said Frederick, who began to feel again quite uneasy. Sir Andrew seemed working himself up into a state of great excitement, for the purpose of revealing something abhorrent to himself, and that he feared to tell his grandson. He was just going off into the same wild strain, when Frederick laid his hand upon the bell-rope, and said, mildly but firmly, that if he did not become calmer, he must ring for Mrs. Truman.

"I'll tell ye the bargain calmly, then, that was made five years ago!" he uttered, in a warm whisper. "It can't be altered, or undone, because she made me sign it; but she's a fine woman, you know—a very fine woman—isn't she? She'll make a first-rate mistress."

"Good God! *what do you mean?*" cried Frederick, turning ashy-white. "What bargain?"

Sir Andrew looked, in his turn, alarmed now at the wan visage of his grandson ; but, making a desperate effort, he spoke the one word ‘ Yourself ! ’

“ *Never !* by heaven ! ” ejaculated Frederick—the spirit of his manhood rising in all its force.

“ Then my cur— ” but the old man’s strength had failed him, and, unable to finish the awful sentence, he fell back in his chair, senseless. Frederick pulled the bell violently, and rushed from the house—from himself, if he could—over the terrace, through the shrubberies, through the park ; over hills he flew like a frightened deer ; he seemed to have the wings of the wind, for he could not stop. For miles he went, till his bodily fatigue obliged him to return, his brain reeling ; he could think of nothing clearly, and barely credited his own scattered senses.

At length, he stopped upon the terrace, close to the spot where he had sat with *her*, 'his flower,' the evening before. What a desert was it now! What a wilderness before him! The *curse*, though incomplete, had filled his every vein with living fire! And was his life's dream this? He remained there, perhaps, an hour, his head uncovered, for the air seemed to blow heaven's soft balm upon it, and cool its aching fever.

A step approaches—he turned—it was Mabel. As she walked towards him, in her stateliness, her dignified form, and face like chiselled marble, he could not repel the reflection, that the epithet applied to her by Emily was not incorrect. She looked a goddess, but of a dark power—the livid hue of the cheek enhanced by the bold, wild light of the eye. He had never seen her look so ill, and yet so demonly

superb! She held a cheque towards him; mechanically he took it; it was for three hundred pounds. He looked at it, judging truly the spirit that had been at work. Not thou, oh, Charity! in thy pure benison—angel of benevolence and truth! but one of earth's lust and worldliness. Yet did he believe he had misjudged her when she so eagerly begged him to accept it, and offer it as his grandfather's gift?

"Was that all he required?" she asked, "and how were they all, and how did Helen bear up against it?"

He spoke not, but shut his eyes, the better to bring before him her dear image, the trusting eye raised to his beseechingly, —and must he disappoint the fond hope he had read there? Yet, if she knew all, would she have wished for aid procured at such a cost? What in those moments did he not endure!

"I cannot take it," he said, holding back the cheque.

A hand was placed upon his arm; the touch thrilled through him, and with a shudder he turned from her. There was a gleam of anger in her eye, though still, a smile upon her lips as she said—

"You are agitated now. Frederick Beresford, listen to me! You feel deeply for the misfortune of that man and his family. You can give him the paltry sum in your hand—but you might have it in your power to raise him from the depth of his misery, and the verge of his ruin, to ease and rest again—to replace what he has lost, and open afresh, the coveted path which has been suddenly closed before him."

He was collected now—his manly figure drawn to his full height, and looking her intently in the face, he asked—

"And at what price is this power?"

The blush which should have been her own, mantled over his fine forehead, to the roots of his hair, as she replied—

“It is before you.”

With one loathing glance he turned away—it pierced her very soul as she fled.

He remained in the same attitude, with the cheque in his hand, spell bound. Again did the mournful face of her he loved appeal to him. Would the withholding of that little drop of comfort from the poor stream yonder, fainting on its way, influence in the least degree, the foaming tide, or change the onward course of the ‘sea of wrecks,’ around him? He put the cheque in his waistcoat pocket, and entered the house. It was past seven o’clock, and he had eaten nothing since the morning; he passed into Sir Andrew’s private room, and rang the bell there. Old John always answered that summons; there were two

liveried lackeys attending the others ; but in the state of mind he was in, he thought the fewer the eyes to look upon him the better. He sat down in his grandfather's chair, and tried to think quietly of what had passed. The late scene on the terrace, reminded him painfully, of the Devil's temptation on the mountain,

“ All this power will I give Thee, if Thou therefore wilt worship me.”

The cold shudder again passed over him, and John, who had entered, asked respectfully if he were unwell.

“ We did not know you had come in, sir ; Miss Mabel desired the dinner should not be served, as she thought you had gone down to Mr. Monmouth's, and might be detained a little while.”

“ I am weary and hungry, John, for I have walked a long distance—bring my dinner to me, here, yourself ; and say I am

not very well. Do you know how my grandfather is, now?"

"He had another fainting fit, after you had gone out, sir; Mrs. Truman says, when she answered the bell, Miss Mabel told her, he had been very bad, indeed."

"Was Miss Mabel with him, then?"

"Yes, sir."

John proceeded to lay the cloth, and Frederick continued his conflicting meditations.

When he arrived at the Grove that night, he found Henry had returned, and was relating to his father the conversation he had had with Mr. Ross, who informed him that the vessel sailed the following week—earlier than had been expected. If they could have managed in any way, to have gone with him, he would promise them all a warm reception when they arrived in India, at the house of his uncle, Colonel Ross, whom he

knew would do all he could to promote his father's admission into the army, as surgeon. It was just when Mr. Monmouth was bewailing the possibility of the step proposed, that Frederick appeared. Helen's bright look changed as all remarked, how ill he looked; he turned the subject lightly; merely stating his grandfather's indisposition that day; he would not for worlds damp the joy, of which he was the bearer, by any selfish feeling of his own. He gave the cheque in silence to Mr. Monmouth, whose heart was too full of thankfulness for speech; he could but grasp Frederick's hand, while the others poured forth their gratitude on him, and his grandfather.

The chief obstacle to their departure was removed, and now it only remained to part with all their valuables, speedily, for the expenses of the voyage, and to defray some small accounts incurred, before they should

leave England. Frederick soon took his leave—for it was very late—their blessings attending him. Helen and Henry went with him to the door; the former gazed at him, anxiously, for his countenance was very sad. She knew he could not bear the idea of their separation, for a time so undefined; she would not revert to it, nor did he.

“If I am not here, Harry, as I could wish, during this your last week in England, you know the cause will be that I do not like to leave my grandfather, who, I fear is sinking fast; and you will not think me unkind.”

He raised Helen's hand to his lips, murmured, “God bless you,” and was gone.

CHAPTER XII.

WILTON GRAHAM had hitherto been his father's curate; but quite lately, he had had a pretty living presented to him in the same county, but it was across the country, and quite a day's journey from the valley. He had arranged to take possession that week, but in consequence of this untoward event, he had postponed his incumbency till the end of the week following, in order that he might superintend with Henry Monmouth, the private sale of the furniture, books, pictures &c., at the Grove. The

little breakfast parlour had been transposed into quite a business office, and Wilton with Henry, was now in the midst of calculation, putting down to each member who had agreed on the purchase, the articles selected. Many had been applied to, who, out of the deep respect they felt for Mr. Graham, had become abettors to this laudable proceeding, although, personally unknown to Mr. Monmouth; and by the early post that morning, Wilton had received several orders, in return to the catalogues he had himself written, with everything valued to the best of his ability, and stating that view might be had of the same, but also observing that those who would trust to his integrity, would confer a considerate kindness on the tried feelings of Mr. Monmouth and his family. His little parsonage had been furnished with elegance and comfort for a bachelor residence; all was completed there, and ready

for his reception ; but he was now noting for his share in the present translation, some things which would, we fear, look rather *outrée* there ; for instance, there were the three bird-cages, and the canary—that was not so bad ; the ladies' work-frames ; Helen's private inkstand, her drawing folio, and her map ; all the girls' school-books, slates, maps, &c., some puzzles, and a large wax doll, which had been given to Helen some seven years before, and who had, since her sudden turn into womanhood, treasured the same in a drawer up-stairs. Emily was laughing heartily, and her mother not much less so, at the idea of Wilton's investment. They had been very cheerful, that little party, in the breakfast-room, considering the circumstances. Henry had that morning received a note from Frederick Beresford, desiring him to send the little box Helen kept her papers in, if it was for

sale. Her poor manuscript was incomplete, but she did not take it out, so it went as it was. The box of itself, when new, was not worth more than two pounds at the utmost. It was scratched and shabby now, with long usage ; but ten pounds were sent back in its place. Helen felt this latter act of generosity more than she had the former great one, because she knew that it had come from his own private purse, which she felt by instinct was not very large. She had gone up-stairs when that money came, and had not been seen since ; so she was absent now from the amusement Wilton's strange choice had occasioned.

“What are you going to do with it—to nurse it ?” asked Emily, still laughing.

He took all her bantering very well, and tried to look grave, while he said—“It shall lie in one of his drawers for the future.”

“Here! who’ll have this?” cried Emily, who was getting into one of her very merry moods — (she held up a vile photograph likeness of Henry). “It’s a good frame, and the *nose* is like ——”

“I will,” said Wilton, adding it to his list.

“Why, you are picking out all the rubbish you can find!” laughed Emily. He was, because he thought it was the only way he could dispose of it. A good fellow was Wilton Graham! “Let me see, my father takes the piano for Annie’s room, and I wrote to Mr. Clifton about the bookcase; I know he wants one, and I don’t think I put it down too high. It’s a wonder I have not heard from him. Is the twelve o’clock post in yet?”

“Talk of an angel, he’ll clap his wings,” said Emily, “here is the postman.”

There were two letters—one for Helen,

in a neat lady's hand—the other from Mr. Clifton, agreeing to take the bookcase, with the principal books it contained, and also the round table in the drawing-room. Helen ran down stairs at the sound of the postman.

"It looks like Marian Grey's," said Emily, giving her the letter.

Helen opened it and read, "*With Georgy's and Marian's kind love and true sympathy.*" It was a bank-note for twenty pounds.

This put every-body into good spirits—Wilton Graham, perhaps, the most so—for, although he had not expressed it, he had begun to get exceedingly anxious. There were many articles of real and solid worth; some of which, owing to the cause, and his exertions, realised more even than their value; but there was also much of an inferior kind to get quit of, which he could not offer to the same parties, and consequently would have to go at a less redun-

dant rate. The highest sum he imagined it possible to accumulate, would fall short, he had felt convinced, for their necessary outlay. His mother often jokingly told him he would be a regular old bachelor—he was so precise in all he thought and did. Be that as it may, he was a true acquisition to the family at the Grove just now. Mr. Monmouth had implicit confidence in his advice, and had, according to it, delayed the ordering of the outfits, which would have to be necessarily ready-made, until they could, in some measure, foretell the result of the sale. Now it was otherwise; the aid just received placed them beyond suspense, and it was agreed that as all the chief things were disposed of, the remainder should be left to be sold after their departure from the valley; and Wilton, with his usual kindness, undertook to see after them all for them, and with what was brought in, defray some

small expenses around. They had heard from George Beresford the day before, telling them he would relieve them of the best dinner and tea-services, all the glass, and the barometer; that he would have been very pleased to have taken more, but the old lady, Marian's aunt, wished to furnish their house according to her own taste.

It was arranged that Mr. and Mrs. Monmouth should set off immediately for London—sleep there, at a friend's house, that night, and return, laden with the requisite stock of wearing apparel for each, on the evening of the following day; and then no time must be lost—to-day was Thursday, and the *Emerald* left the docks on Friday week. There was all the marking and packing to be done, and some things would of necessity have to be ordered to be in readiness for them against their arrival in London, previous to joining

the vessel. They wished, if possible, to leave the valley for good, on the Tuesday, that all might be comfortably stowed on board before their own embarkation.

Their consultation was here interrupted by the housemaid, who said that there were two sailor-looking men requesting to see her master. They proved to be policemen in plain clothes.

It appeared that, on the night of the robbery, one of them, who had been on his beat, and then about half a mile from D—— village, was turning back towards it, as the storm increased—had been, to use his own expression, ‘taken aback, and nearly upset by a man bolting through the hedge.’ He cried, “Hilloa! not in such a hurry, my good fellow;” but had apologized almost instantly, on finding him, as far as he could see, attired as a gentleman, and in the garb of a quaker. It was too

dark to examine him closely, which, however, he did as soon as he reached the first lamp-post in the village, and discovered that his clothes looked good and new. He had also apologized, courteously, for startling the policeman ; but said that he was on an errand of life and death—that his only child, put at the ‘Cove’ to nurse, was dying. The ‘Cove’ was full sixteen miles from where they were, and he said that he had come from a place almost as far distant the other way—that his horse had been seized with staggers, and he had left it at a small farm-house on the road-side, intending, as he said, to push forth all the strength he had, and see if his legs could not carry him there, before many hours were over his head. The policeman warned him of the approaching violence of the storm, and also informed him where he could procure a vehicle ; but the stranger,

giving him half-a-crown, said he would rather hurry on his way, fearing he should never see his child alive again; and every moment he was detained appeared to him an hour.

“He had a great coat on, and his clos’ was good; but summut about him struck me he wasn’t as how a *raal* gemman; and, though he *thee’d* and *thou’d* me, I didn’t think him *quite* a *broad-brim*, for all that.”

Every enquiry had been made since that night, but no such person had been seen at the ‘Cove,’ or yet at the farm-house he had mentioned; but, early the following morning, the carrier had given some one a lift, as far as H——, whom he described in a similar way. Nothing there, however, could be ascertained concerning him. The carrier was a man of few words himself, and said that very few had passed between him and the gentleman, who looked

drenched to the skin when he took him up, 'and seemed very glad of a pipe to *dry himself*.'

This circumstance had assumed further importance, by the fact of one of Sir Andrew's gamekeepers having, as he left the little ale-house at the corner of the valley, on the night in question, seen a man jump over the gate from the wood, and disappear behind the church, evidently wishing to escape observation. It was, as we have said, so dark, and the action so sudden, that the gamekeeper could give no description of his person, further than that he was positive the man had a bundle or something under his arm. He had set him down for a gipsy, knowing that a camp had been seen upon the hill that day; and he thought he'd pop in and tell Bob, the night keeper, to look well after the pheasants, &c.; but, the storm coming on, he had made the best of his way home.

The policeman seemed to think it might probably have been one and the same person, and that for security he had changed his clothes, the bundle being composed of those he had seen him in. Mr. Monmouth had not consented to the arrest of the house-maid; hitherto he could find nothing like evidence, in his own mind, against her. She had been in a sad state, poor girl! knowing that she was looked upon with suspicion. Her parents, poor but respectable people, had wished her to leave a situation directly, where she had been accused of dishonesty; but she wisely determined to stay while the family remained in the valley, hoping that the real culprit might be discovered, and thus establish, beyond a doubt, her innocence. Again was the trembling creature questioned and cross-questioned; she declared solemnly "that she had never walked with a Quaker gentleman

in all her life, and that she could not abear them ; and that she had had no young man since her poor Willy died." Once more was she dismissed, and this time the poor girl's tears, and natural self-vindication from the share in the crime imputed to her, affected all her auditors ; and Mr. Monmouth said he would not have her called forth again, unless something was discovered reflecting, undoubtedly, upon her.

Nothing could be learnt of the man at either of the stations, and it was supposed that he must either have again changed his disguise, or else made off from H—— in the direction of the sea-coast. Mr. and Mrs. Monmouth's affairs would admit of no delay. The little conveyance which travelled to and from the D—— station, was waiting for them at the door ; so, hastily wishing good-bye, they set off on their journey, leaving Wilton and Henry still conversing with the two policemen.

There was an old woman at the Cove Wilton knew something of. She bore a very indifferent character, as, also, did many of the inhabitants of that place. They were poor and mean to a degree, and their dwellings consisted, for the most part, of dirty hovels—some only of mud. A few years ago, Mr. Graham had shown great kindness to, and got released from gaol this woman's son, who had been engaged in some affair of piracy. Wilton now proposed that Henry and he should ride over there, and see if they could glean anything from her, which might, perhaps, in some way, throw a light upon the matter; that the two girls should go to his father's, and remain there till the following evening; that Henry and he would sleep somewhere on the road, and then the former, who was to have waited, on account of his sisters being alone, till the Saturday morning,

might go straight to H——, and be up in London on the following day. The girls were very pleased at this arrangement; for since the night of the storm, they had felt rather more timid than formerly, which was not to be wondered at, and they did not much relish the idea of sleeping at the Grove, without their father or brother: they, therefore, gladly acceded to this proposal, and, very soon after, were kindly welcomed by Mr. and Mrs. Graham.

What a relief it is when for days we have been brooding over one thing—when our minds are so overcharged with sorrow, that we become stoical enough to feel indifferent as to what may follow, or what befall us next! Where, although if the cloud were pierced, would faith and trust be found hand in hand, reposing; all without seems coldly calm and still, for the heart is desolate within us. Even so felt Helen Monmouth—even so she appeared.



Annie Graham was a good-hearted girl, but being an only one, was very spoilt and vain. She was rattling along to Emily, of the conquests she had made at the large ball at H——, the night before. One young man, she was sure, was smitten desperately, he never moved from her side all the evening ; he was such a dear fellow, and had such a darling moustache ; his eyes were not quite so dazzling as Henry's, but he was more brilliant in conversation ; but poor Henry had laboured under disadvantages, she thought, and always had so much to bear, poor fellow ! He had no time to think of marriage and that sort of thing. She daresay he'd think about it more, when he got out to India, and perhaps remember those he had left behind. Helen was assisting Mrs. Graham, who was very busy, sorting some baby frocks and petticoats, for her husband's poor parishoners, and

wondering in her mind, if Annie would ever be as sensible as her mother was.

“Here is a letter for you, Miss Helen,” said Mr. Graham, holding it up as he entered.

Helen’s colour rose, for she thought Mr. Graham looked at her enquiringly. The hand-writing she knew to be Frederick Beresford’s, it was the first time he had ever written to her, and fearing it might contain bad news of Sir Andrew, she asked permission to read it. After breaking the seal she stepped into the balcony, for the first words flurried her a little.

“MY OWN DEAR ONE,

“I have been endeavouring to get down to the valley for the last two or three days, but my grandfather has been so very unwell, from time to time, that I am afraid to leave him even for an hour. Dr. Baines

says, his life is 'quite uncertain, now, from one day to another—he is breaking fast, I fear, dear Helen, and oh! when I look round me, and think of all I am so soon to lose—all I love—there seems indeed but little on earth to live for. Nevertheless, to follow your own beautiful advice, I will not mourn nor be cast down, for there is One, whose all-searching eye seeth our infirmities, and will not afflict us more than we can bear. He will be, dearest, as you so truly and so often have said, that Rock, unto which we may, at all times, so safely cling—that Beacon which shall guide us safely, to the land of peace at last. If after my grandfather's death, affairs can be put, any-how, in such a way that I can leave them, even, if the intricate and disorderly state, in which I fear to find them, keeps me some few

years in bondage to watch over them—yet, at last, when I am free, I may be able to follow the sweet fragrance of my flower to another shore.

I hope to be at our dear, little church on Sunday, your last here! (for how long?) Oh! the thought—I will not contemplate it—but, as you would have me do, and I would have you, wait patiently God's own time, and will. When do you leave the Abbey? I heard, on Tuesday—but I trust I shall know all about it on Sunday. With the fond and undying affection of one, who is so ruled by adverse circumstances, that he feels but a puppet in a conjuror's hand, believe me whatever may befall, to remain,

“Your own

“FREDERICK.”

And this she thrust into her bosom, there

to dwell, till it should become yellow
and crumbled—treasured fondly next
the heart, like the blest memory of our
childhood.

CHAPTER XIII.

IF the breakfast-parlour at the Grove had looked like business before, I scarcely know how to describe it now. It was literally crammed with heaps of shirts, petticoats, flannels, and all indescribables. Mr. and Mrs. Monmouth, and Helen, had been from seven o'clock that morning, hard at work ; and yet there were quantities still unmarked. Emily and the housemaid removed the articles as they were finished, and placed them in piles in the now-empty drawing-room ; it had been shorn of all its elegance, and only

a few forlorn chairs remained to tell its tale of former opulence.

The Monmouths had received another proof—though an humble one—of the good will held towards them. Two capacious sea-chests, well and strong-built, with Mr. Monmouth's initials in brass nails on the top, had been sent the day before, 'with Mrs. Truman's duty and kind respects.' These were now standing in the places of couches, ottomans, &c., with various other trunks and boxes for packing. All the principal furniture was sold; but this was the only room that had been stripped, the removal of the remainder being left till after their departure.

When they went into the dining-room, at two o'clock, to dinner, Helen looked so knocked up, that she was made to lie down on the sofa, and have her morsel there. In fact, she and her father had done, in reality,

all the work. Mrs. Monmouth did not make such progress with her pen as she did in Berlin wool. Although she appeared wonderfully reconciled to the proceedings around her, she had twice repeated during their morning's occupation, 'that this fuss was quite out of her way.' Her husband told her, he feared she would have to enter into many things rather out of her way; but that all should be made as light and agreeable to her as possible.

Before the cloth was removed, she had fallen fast asleep in her chair; and Helen observing the weary look of her father, persuaded him to follow her mother's example. He resisted at first, saying, there was so much more which ought to be done that day, so as to leave less for Monday, if possible, and time for a little rest and reflection, on their last evening in the place where they had received so much unlooked-for kindness and

consideration. But Helen argued that he would be refreshed and able to do more if he rested then ; so, overcome by her reasoning, and his own fatigue, he settled himself in the easy chair for a doze.

Emily had laid herself down on the rug, with her head on a footstool, and was manifesting pretty loudly that her cares for the present were at rest. As soon as all was quiet, Helen stole, on tiptoe, into the drawing-room, and there began in good earnest the packing of one of the great chests. She thought deeply, as she went on, and fell into such a reverie at last, that, without knowing it, she had nearly packed half, as closely as could be, when a knock at the door aroused her.

Henry was not expected back till late that night ; he wished to spend his last Sunday in England among their good friends and benefactors ; but would leave, finally,

sition to you, which you did not think proper then, to accept ; and I have to thank you for the delicacy of your refusal ; but I think I was premature, and well knowing your strict sense of right, am not at a loss, to understand, and appreciate your feelings on the subject. I have now a pretty home to offer you. I was never gifted as some are, I think, with great fluency of speech ; at all events, I find I cannot just now use it. Excuse its plainness, and believe, that it shall be the aim of *my life*, to lighten the burden inevitable to our fallen state, and promote the peace and happiness of your life."

The deep rosy hue once more deserted her cheek, and left it well nigh colourless. His arm was round her, supporting her as tenderly as though she were a child.

"As a brother, dear Wilton," she gasped, "I will ever love you. Oh ! it is pain and grief to me to refuse you !—after all your

disinterested kindness, forgive me, keep my secret!—Young as I am, Wilton, *I have no heart to give!*”

She covered her face with her hands, quite overcome; he moved to the window, and she could see when she looked towards him, that he was the same. It was a bitter trial to both; for her to inflict, and for him to bear! At length, approaching her, he said.

“It is not for me to ask the name of him, whom you have so blessed; but with whomsoever, or wherever you may dwell, may you possess the love and happiness, that you so well deserve; and for this, shall you have the constant prayers of Wilton Graham.”

He gently kissed her, and left the room. And she? She rose, and locked the door, and kneeling down, in her old place by the box, gave way to the flood of tears she had so

long restrained. The constant talking and bustle, going on round her, made her pine for quietude; and, faint with excess of feeling, she went into the garden, and seated herself upon a bench, on the a lawn—soon buried in reflection on all that had occurred during the last week. She never could account for it; but she found herself before long standing underneath the pantry-window, at the side of the house; measuring, in her eye, the distance from the window to the ground. Something shined there, on the mould; she picked it up, while a wild and hideous thought shot through her brain. It was a small, pocket clasp-knife, with three blades, the same she remembered to have seen a few weeks ago, in the hand of the boy, ‘Malcolm Lee.’ Unbidden, and against her inclination, rose up before her, all her strange fears on that memorable evening at Belmore. The vision

of the face on the terrace, predominant. But it was absurd—ridiculous! What was she thinking of? The boy had been down there, often of late, to fish—he must have dropped this knife. ‘*But how did it come under that window?*’ A fearful suspicion stole over her; she remained standing there some minutes. Her mind was made up. She would tell no one. The die was cast; and it was useless to raise a suspicion and create a disturbance now, which might fruitlessly interfere with, and perhaps overturn all their present plans, and that for no final good. She would put the knife in paper, and seal it, and place it at the bottom of her little work-box, which she always kept locked. When she remembered that the boy had been miles away on that eventful night, she chid herself for such false and uncharitable reasoning. Yet she could not feel satisfied—the chord, once awakened,

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vibrated painfully ; but by degrees, the changing scene around her, diverted her mind from the unpleasant rumination.

At the tea-table she looked so ill, and felt so thoroughly done-up with the conflicting sensations she had that day experienced, that reluctantly she took the advice of all, and withdrew to bed.

CHAPTER XIV.

THERE is something divine in the first awakening glimpse of a lovely Sunday morning, in the country. The glorious sunbeam, stealing through your window, tells, though "with voice unheard to outer sense," the hallowed rest of that sacred day, and whispers to the soul the promised bliss of a brighter world. The very air seems to exhale its holiness—the birds, to warble softer melody, and the heart is raised to God in gratitude and praise. Soon, borne gently by the breeze, is heard the calm

sound of the 'Sabbath Bell,' and a motley group is on its way to the little ivy-covered temple of God. The young, the middle-aged, the old and infirm, alike assembling there. The prayers have begun, but Frederick Beresford has not arrived. The 'Hall Pew' is some few pews in advance of that occupied by the Monmouth family. We must pardon Helen, if she looks wistfully down the aisle, now and then; and Wilton Graham also, if his voice trembles, as he reads, "For they got not the land in possession through their own sword: neither was it their own arm that helped them." The psalm was nearly finished, when Frederick entered his pew. Helen noticed that his eye was heavy, and his cheeks looked flushed and thin. He turned round once, and their eyes met. Perhaps he had some such impression with regard to her; for, as he bent his head to his book, he looked still more sorrowful and anxious than before.

The lessons for that morning's service were particularly beautiful. The second administered peace and consolation indeed, to the ears of many a 'mourning one' present. It was the 14th chapter of St. John ; and though the same, had of course been often read before, perhaps it was never listened to more eagerly than now by those so much in need of comfort in that little congregation. "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you." "If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it." "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter that he may abide with you for ever."

Such sentences as these poured precious balm in each wounded spirit, and all had gradually attained that soothing frame of mind suitable to the matter of the sermon

prepared, and about to be delivered, by their revered pastor. It was like a farewell address to those sheep of his flock, who were going so unexpectedly to leave his fold. There was, even in his opening prayer, that cadence and deep pathos of voice, which at once rivetted the attention, and roused the keen interest, of his auditors. His was no high-flown language, incomprehensible to his poorer hearers, but naturally so heart-felt and genuine in its simplicity, that the youngest and most ignorant of his congregation might understand and acknowledge. He warmed in his theme as he continued—spoke with eloquence of the regret which, he felt sure, all shared in the approaching separation; and, in the conclusion of his discourse, he earnestly begged all present to join in supplication to the Almighty for their welfare and success. He touched delicately

upon the future calling of those hurried away by the deep wrong done them.

“Eternal God, fountain of all mercy, cast Thy benediction upon these Thy people. Thou hast called them to their occupation, and commanded them to use the talent Thou hast given them. They await the breeze; let the wind blow, and the sails fill; then shall their affection and faculties be engaged. Waft them safely on their course. Grant them the power to use their industry for the promotion of their own good, and that of those dependent on them. Guide them in all their transactions. May they be diligent and faithful. Give them favour, that their labour be accepted, and that they prosper in their separate callings. Endow them with prudence and Christian sincerity,—that, when at last their task is completed, their allotted portion filled, they may gain that

endless inheritance which never can be taken away, and dwell in blissful security with Jesus Christ, their Redeemer." His lip quivered, and his eye was full. Wilton was obliged to leave the desk. "Let us not murmur at the mysterious dispensation of Providence; but let us pray that He may give them of the fruit of their hands, and that they go on their way rejoicing."

Frederick promised Henry, after church, that he would come down in the evening, if his grandfather was as comfortable and tranquil as he had appeared when he left him; but as the hours passed, and he did not come, Henry and Helen walked up to the hall, to see the old man, and thank him in words—as Mr. Monmouth had already done in writing—for the great deed of kindness he had bestowed upon them in their hour of need. They feared he was not well, otherwise they felt sure Frederick would have been with them.

It was as they expected. Sir Andrew had been seized with a paralytic attack that afternoon. It had been as much internally as outwardly. His senses had in some measure returned, but the whole of his left side was powerless.

They waited some time in the octagon drawing-room, as it was called, and at length Mrs. Truman came to them. She could hardly control her unfeigned sorrow at the approaching dissolution of her old master.

"Where is Miss Mabel?" asked Helen.

"Oh! she is with him, miss. I was ordered out of the room about half an hour ago. Poor Master Frederick! she will not leave him ten minutes alone with his grandfather.

"I should soon order *her* out if I were Frederick," said Henry.

"What a good job it will be when she goes!" murmured Helen.

“Ah, miss!—God knows—”

Here Frederick joined them, and the old housekeeper, with a heavy sigh, left the room. His cheek was flushed, and he seemed much excited. The same thought crossed the minds of both brother and sister, that his features wore more an expression of extreme annoyance and disquietude than of grief. There was always a certain dignity of character in Frederick Beresford, as has been before stated, which kept familiarity at a distance; it seemed increased now, even to these his greatest friends. His words came quick and short, and he seemed to pant for breath.

Henry thought to himself—“He has discovered the entangled state of his affairs, poor fellow!” and Helen, poor girl! fancied it was a natural manner in one of so great a mind at such a crisis. But she felt a choking sensation in her throat, when she

thought that such was to be her last interview, perhaps, in this world, with him to whom she had given her young heart, in all its freshness and purity. They both had sufficient tact to see that he would be better alone, and rose to take leave. She put her little hand in his ; he held it between both his own for so long that her embarrassment increased, and her stifled feeling too. It was still clasped there, when he turned to Henry, saying, hurriedly—"How deeply he felt his inability to accompany him up to London, on the following morning, as had been agreed ; but that Drs. Sherwood and Baines had both declared, that within twenty-four hours the change for life or death must take place, and they neither of them gave the slightest hope." His eyes filled for the first time. He said—"How much he had wished to go to Portsmouth with them all, and see the vessel that was

to be their ocean home ; but how fearfully had it been proved that ‘man appoints, and God disappoints.’” He then wished to order the carriage to convey them back to the ‘Grove,’ for Helen looked so tired. She could not speak ; but Henry thanked him, saying—“We think of walking up to the ‘Crest,’ to bid poor old Dick good-bye ; I think the walk will do Helen good, rather than otherwise, for she has been kept so close to the house for some days now. We can go home, you know, the short way, through the wood.”

He now wrung Frederick’s hand. “God bless you, old fellow !” he said. “Bear up well ; I wish I had not to leave you at this trying time.”

“God bless you !” returned Frederick ; and may we meet again, at some future day, with far brighter prospects before us. You have had much to bear. God knows,

I have ; but the heart knoweth its own bitterness. If, in years to come, it is in my power in any way to serve you, at any time show your friendship, Harry, by testing mine. May God guard you both ! ”

“ *My poor flower !* ” he murmured, as they turned to go.

Helen took her brother’s arm ; he pressed her to him, and she felt, although no word was spoken, that he knew and pitied all she suffered.

A fresh breeze fanned their brows as they mounted the hill called ‘ the Crest,’ on which Carter’s cottage stood. Amy was seated at the door, reading. She ushered them in with native grace and courtesy. “ The old people,” she said, “ are gone to church ; ” and, when they were seated, she told them how much their uneasiness was increased for their idiot brother ; how he had seemed more wild, and absented him-

self more than ever, of late, and for so many hours at a time, that they could not imagine where he went to, or what he could be about. Amy spoke but little in the ordinary way. She was yielding and gentle to a degree ; and, as she stood there with her golden hair and soft face, she reminded one of that sunbeam we spoke of in the early morn. There was something angel-like about Amy. As the air was chilly, and it would take some time to walk home, they did not wait for their parents ; but, leaving them a kind message, set off on their return. They had not gone far into the wood before Helen espied the recumbent form of poor Paul fast asleep. Henry wished to pass on, but Helen said—" Oh, do let us wake him ! he may be there for hours, and they will be so anxious." She did so very cautiously, but he started up, nevertheless, with a shrill yell—" There's a rich supper in the lair !"

He screeched, staring wildly round —
“Where’s the young eagle? Hunt!—
hunt for the young eagle!”

“Go home directly,” said Helen—“your father and mother are very frightened about you—go home!” He stared full in her face, and yet his eye looked as if it did not see her, so frightful was it in its vacancy.—
“Go home,” she repeated. — “Home!—home.” “*Ah! he’s gone home;*” and away he bounced at his usual pace, but not in the direction of the cottage.

They hastened on, for the night was advancing. Beneath them, shadowed by the hills, lay the valley, and above them, shone the stars, like jewels in the crown of the Omnipotent. No wonder that Henry was sleepless that night, and heard the clock strike hour after hour—no wonder that Helen’s troubled vision came and went from her troubled eyes, till they vanished alto-

gether, and left her painfully awake—and her senses painfully acute. No wonder that at last, she arose from her restless couch, and throwing a wrapper round her, gazed out upon the cold grey night. There are those in the world who feel no interest or kindred association in the scenes around them; they only meet their own dull thoughts, even though they may stand upon a mountain-pass; or view, as Helen did, the fine old towers and trees, in the deep night shadows.

“What if I could see and hear now, in spirit, things that are inaudible and invisible—thoughts, passing in the hearts of those few actors of life’s tragedy, within the dim old walls of Belmore? What would the revelation be? Too much, perhaps, for mortal view! In one, I trust, all would be solemn and serene, his countenance not sorrowful, nor yet glad, but hopeful; illumi-

nated by the same power, from whom the angel hovering him, repeating her challenge in tones of love and consolation, has been sent. In another, (oh ! good angels guard him !) feelings of peaceful resignation—of no creature longing to keep here, in the dust, the soul touched by the breath of heaven !—no selfish grasping for the ransomed one, but strength—support !—to gaze upon the face which soon must perish—the form on which the worms must shortly feed. Can I go on ? Yes ; in one, poor and humble, the pang is great !—the difficulty to reconcile the crumbling certainty with the unfathomable gulf of uncertainty, is mournfully oppressive.

* * * *

A cold shiver benumbed her, and she lay down again.

CHAPTER XV.

THE reader has seen that we have carried on our story five years without explanation ; and none was needed. Mr. Beresford, Mabel's father, died as unsuccessful men with turbulent souls generally do die, peevishly and sulkily. The only consolation attending his dying moments was the fact that life had utterly lost all its savour for him.

On the death of her father, Mabel had, naturally, gone to reside with her uncle, Sir Andrew Beresford ; and the gossips had

indulged in a certain amount of conversation, respecting her and her cousin, Frederick Beresford ; but there was something in Mabel's manner so cold and stern, that the memory of it threw a chill over the rankest tea-table, and she was the subject of fewer innuendos than fell to the lot of any young lady on the country side.

Mr. Mowbray had gone abroad.

What had Mabel's life been during these five years ? Had she become a nun in the convent of resignation, or was she still living in the world of action, battling against her fate ?

Let us seek her where she sits in her boudoir, with head bent down on folded arms, striving to trace back her life to the days of innocence and happiness. The torturing reflection of what might have been, had the reality not been, with every memory face to face, drives her at length to seek

refuge once more, in the indulgence of the bitterness of her heart.

She had been deceived, betrayed, had suffered a great wrong, and under circumstances which forbade her even to complain of fate.

* * * *

When Mabel's passionate love for her cousin, Frederick Beresford, received the terrible shock of being ridiculed and despised by the boy to whom she had given up every thought of the sweetest years of her life, her first overwhelming desire was for flight, any whither, and to any fate ; her second desire was for vengeance, not against Frederick Beresford, but against the man to whom, justly or unjustly, she attributed all the new torture which she felt.

To fly from Frederick, to torture Mowbray, and to sever at once the cold bond of duty which bound her to her father, were objects

of desire, which at that time stood between Mabel and the universe, blotting out from her soul the consciousness of love, **right**, or religion ; and as Mowbray, seizing his opportunity, pressed his suit, she determined to obtain them all by becoming his wife.

She was but too ready to accede to Mowbray's proposal of a marriage on the Scotch border. Such a marriage alone could she have endured, whilst under the feverish anger which possessed her.

To avoid the vulgar excitement of pursuit, she told her father that she was about to pay a visit to her uncle Sir Andrew. He was too self-absorbed to care to make any inquiries.

"We are on Scotch ground," said Mr. Mowbray, at length, after two days of uninterrupted travel. Mabel scarcely heeded him.

• We care little for the present hour, when we are buried in schemes for the fu-

ture. Mabel had resolved upon the bitterest revenge in any woman's power; she would be Mowbray's wife, and heap dishonour upon his head; the cold self-possession, on which he so much prided himself, should give way before that ridicule from which a man has no escape but by some one's death.

Two days after the marriage, she told him all; told him how her mother, years and years ago, on her death-bed had confessed to her that their neighbour, Mr. Mowbray, had poisoned the happiness of her life, and persecuted her in a manner which, hateful as it was, gradually began to have its own fascinations; and that she might have yielded, had not death drawn nigh—death, the only reliable aid to human virtue in distress. Mabel went on to say how this interview with her mother in her last moments, had changed the whole cur-

rent of her life, and at once robbed her of every feeling of youthful carelessness.

“ You have done me this injury, and a further injury, which you cannot have forgotten ; and now it will be the business of my life to reward you ; the thought of me will be a spectre from which you shall never escape ; the idea of degradation at my hands shall be ever before you. I have nothing to fear, and nothing to hope. Shall we proceed on our journey ? ”

There were a devilish triumph and fixity of purpose in the woman's eyes as she uttered these words ; but these expressions gave way to one of surprise, as Mr. Mowbray quietly replied—

“ Where will you like to go ? ”

“ Oh ! to the ancestral towers, of course. I am eager to join the long line of illustrious matrons who adorn its walls ! ”

“ Yes ; but you see, my dear girl,” said

Mr. Mowbray, with well-assumed hesitation and embarrassment, "there are certain objections to that."

"Am I not your wife?"

"Not exactly."

"Was not that the Scotch border where the ceremony took place?"

"No. The English border."

"Lost! lost! lost!"

The woman uttered the words herself, but she was unconscious of doing so, and to her ears they seemed to have been whispered from some great distance. It was rather a trance than a swoon which came upon her. She was conscious of everything except the sensation of life.

"I loved your mother, Mabel, and I should have loved you, but you treated me with scorn as she had treated me with scorn, and I determined to be revenged. I am. At the same time, as a man ought to pay for

the pleasure of revenge, as well as anything else, I shall burn some bonds and notes I hold of your father, and you will thereby become an heiress. You need fear no embarrassment from me, for I shall immediately go abroad, never to return. Should you wish to have any token by which to remember me, I may mention that there is an idiot boy living in your neighbourhood, with persons of the name of Carter, and generally supposed to be their son, in whom I feel, or ought to feel, some interest ; should you be inclined to bestow any care upon him or his brother, who lives in Wales at that address, (he threw a card towards her) under the name of Malcolm Lee, you would be conferring a favour upon their father, who, has not, I must confess, shown towards them, that amount of parental affection to which, perhaps, they have a claim."

* * * *

When Mabel reached home she was told that her father was dying. She went at once to his room, and aroused him from a deep lethargic slumber, into which he had fallen. He was too weak to display feeling of any sort—too weak to be even querulous.

“You are married to Frederick Beresford, Mabel? well—well!”

“I am not married!”

There was that in her face which even a dying man could not mistake; and a cold horror crept over his face, which was the token of the death of his heart, if not of his body.

“Oh, Frederick! why have you done this?—why have you done this? I remember you such a child—quite a little child—running through the fields!” So the old man went babbling on in his mistake. At length he said, “send for Sir Andrew!”

* * * *

When the baronet came, the dying man had just sufficient strength to tell the sad story ; but, as he was about to utter Frederick Beresford's name, his voice failed, and he died.

* * * *

"Tell me his name, Mabel!" said Sir Andrew, as she took the glittering rings from her fingers and laid them upon those rebellious lids, which would shrink back and show the dull eyes of death looking out upon the world as though the actor, his part being played out, would still peep from behind the curtain to see what the audience was about.

"I will tell you at my own time!" she replied.

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